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Sermons

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SERMONS,
ON
PHILOSOPHICAL, EVANGELICAL,
AND
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS:
DESIGNED
FOR THE USE OF VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS
OF
CHRISTIANS.

BY THE REV. ELI MEEKER.

New-York:
STEREOTYPED BY JAMES CONNER,
FRANKLIN BUILDINGS.

1830.

Northern District of New-York, to wit.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twenty-fourth day of April, in the fifty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1827, Eli Merker, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit:—

"Sermons on Philosophical, Evangelical, and Practical Subjects: designed for the use of various Denominations of Christians. By the Rev. Eli Merker."

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R. R. LANSING,
Clerk of the Northern District of New-York.

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PREFACE.

FOR the purpose of rendering the following work the more useful, a considerable portion of three interesting subjects, is taken from the writings of men so eminent, that publick utility is offered as an apology for thus presuming. The topicks, comprising the selections, are those of characteristicks and peculiarities of human beings—the wonderful formation of man—the resurrection of the human body, and wonderfully glorious change. A few particulars have been selected from other authors.

It is hoped the selection of subjects, and their illustration, will interest many who are not professedly pious, as well as edify the most devout Christian. The present and future well being of man is the object for which these Sermons appear in print. The author humbly hopes this work will, in some degree, prove useful for the promoting of its designed end; therefore it is presented to the publick.

CONTENTS.

SERMON II.

<i>God's Works originally perfect.</i>	PAGE
--	------

SERMON III.

Characteristics of Human Identity.

Acts xvii. 26.—And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. 21

HARMONY III.

Peculiarities consistent with Identity-

ACTS xvii. 26.—And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. 31

SERMON IV.

Characteristics of a Human Being.

SERMON V.

Man urged to act worthy of his dignified Nature.

ZIRKON V.

Envy, one of the basest Passions of the Human Breast.

ESTHER v. 13. — Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate. . . . 73

SERMON VII.

Little things blight the fairest prospects of Man.

Solomon's Song ill. 15. — Take us the foxes, the little foxes,
that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes. 25

SERMON VIII.

<i>Man, admonished of his duty by inferiour Creatures.</i>	PAGE
PROVERBS vi. 6.—Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.	97

SERMON IX.

<i>Connexion of Obedience and Blessings.</i>	
MARK iii. 5.—Stretch forth thine hand.	111

SERMON X.

<i>A vain Curiosity reproved.</i>	
JOHN xxi. 22.—What is that to thee? follow thou me.	125

SERMON XI.

<i>The value and use of Money.</i>	
ECCLESIASTES x. 19.—Money answereth all things.	137

SERMON XII.

<i>The demoralizing influence of bad examples.</i>	
1 CORINTHIANS xv. 33.—Evil communications corrupt good manners.	149

SERMON XIII.

<i>The duty and wisdom of Christian watchfulness.</i>	
MARK xiii. 37.—What I say unto you, I say unto all. Watch.	163

SERMON XIV.

<i>The fearful and wonderful formation of Man.</i>	
PSALM cxxxix. 14.—I am fearfully and wonderfully made.	175

SERMON XV.

<i>The fearful and wonderful formation of Man.</i>	
PSALM cxxxix. 14.—I am fearfully and wonderfully made.	193

SERMON XVI.

<i>A Man's Religion may be his Ruin.</i>	
ISAIAH xxviii. 20.—For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.	207

SERMON XVII.

<i>Joseph's Affection worthy of imitation.</i>	
GENESIS xliv. 4.—I am Joseph, your brother.	219

SERMON XVIII.

<i>On grieving the Holy Spirit.</i>	PAGE
EPHESIANS iv. 30.—Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. . . .	229

SERMON XIX.

<i>Neglect of Present Duty the Ruin of Man.</i>	
1 KINGS xx. 40.—As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.	243

SERMON XX.

<i>The Path of Human Happiness.</i>	
PSALM iv. 6.—There be many that say, Who will show us any good.	255

SERMON XXI.

<i>Little things make up the Character of a Man.</i>	
LUKE xvi. 10.—He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.	269

SERMON XXII.

<i>The Divine Dispensations Progressive.</i>	
DANIEL xii. 4.—Knowledge shall be increased.	287

SERMON XXIII.

<i>Man's Opposition to Christ Groundless.</i>	
JOHN xv. 25.—They hated me without a cause.	299

SERMON XXIV.

<i>The Malignity of Sin.</i>	
ROMANS vii. 13.—That sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful.	311

SERMON XXV.

<i>Christian Faithfulness.</i>	
NUMBERS xiv. 24.—But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereto he went, and his seed shall possess it.	327

SERMON XXVI.

The Resurrection of the Human Body, and wonderfully glorious Change.

PAGE

- 1 CORINTHIANS xv. 53.—This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . 343

SERMON XXVII.

The Resurrection of the Human Body, and wonderfully glorious Change.

- 1 CORINTHIANS xv. 53.—This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . 363

SERMON XXVIII.

Ministers of the Gospel encouraged to hold forth Variety, as a prominent trait in their Publick Discourses.

- MATTHEW xiii. 52.—Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old. 371

SERMON XXIX.

Ministers of the Gospel encouraged to hold forth Variety, as a prominent trait in their Publick Discourses.

- MATTHEW xiii. 52.—Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old. 395

SERMON XXX.

Man must render his final Account to God.

- LUKE xvi. 2.—Give an account of thy stewardship. 409

SERMON I.

GOD'S WORKS ORIGINALLY PERFECT.

GENESIS I. 31.

*And God saw every thing that he had made ; and, behold,
it was very good.*

THE word of God is indeed an inexhaustible treasure of goodly pearls. In its vast resources may be found the richest jewels, and the most costly diamonds. To the cultivator of the earth is presented a field of immense value—to the merchant, the choicest goods and the most durable riches. To the wise are exhibited rich stores of hidden wisdom ; and the simple are invited to receive instruction, and lay hold on understanding. Beauty and sublimity adorn its sacred pages, which invite the scholar to improve his taste, and attain the highest refinement of his mind. From this exuberant source, the hungry soul may obtain the choicest food—the weary find rest—and the thirsty drink of the waters of salvation. The poor may be made rich—the beggar wear a crown—and frail mortals be clothed with glorious immortality. The most able instructions are given, that man may wisely order his conduct in time ; but their chief value must be estimated from those important truths, which relate to eternity.

The present subject exhibits the view which the Lord had, when his works of creation were completed ; and they are represented as glorious and excellent, worthy of a Being supremely wise and good. Mankind readily discern and acknowledge, that some of the divine works bear evident

marks of divine goodness; and they are prone to conjecture that some are not stamped with wisdom nor benevolence. But the Creator himself has declared them *all* not only to be *good*, but to be *very* good. All the works which God created, in six days, he considered as superlatively excellent; and as such they are announced to man, who should view them in the same light. None were marred in the making; all of them answered the Creator's purpose, and were admirably adapted to show forth his glory.

Doubtless, one reason why mankind are no more astonished and affected with the displays of the wondrous goodness of God in his works of creation, is, that they have such limited or scanty views of the divine works; consequently they are unable to discern, to a very great extent, the supremely benevolent design. But the more any one becomes acquainted with cause and effect, and the more he is enabled to search into the nature of things, so far as man is capable, by contemplating the manifestations of the divine works, the more is he led to see and admire the supreme wisdom and goodness of their Creator.

Another reason, why many do not grant that every thing which the Lord has made is very good, is, that they confine their views to the world and its inhabitants as in a state of condemnation, and not in their original perfection. They do not consider how very different the appearance and reality of things were, before the entrance of sin into the world. The earth, and every thing that pertains to it, are materially changed, and under the curse of God, in consequence of the sin of our first parents, and of the sins of the world.

By contrasting the present and the original state of the works of creation, our views may be enlarged concerning the divine goodness. Let us notice the words of the text: "And God saw every thing that he had made; and, behold, it was very good."

Thus the great Creator viewed his works, on the sixth day, when the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. All things were peculiarly adapted to their subordinate ends, and the more perfectly to promote the supreme object for which they were created. They not only as a stupendous system, exhibited the wisdom and goodness of God, but every part, both in the natural and moral creation, was admirably designed to manifest the being and perfections of Jehovah. Infinite wisdom and benevolence devised the wondrous scheme; and almighty power gave existence. As the Lord is by nature invisible, so the external symbols, displayed in the manifold works of creation, are the book of nature, in which finite intelligences may read, and form consistent and exalted views of his true character.

In the illustration of the present proposition, but few things can be noticed. The object will be to show, that the original state of the world, both in a natural and moral point of view, was far more excellent and desirable than the present. Man and his varied situations and relations, will constitute the chief part of this discourse, though not exclusively of the material world, and the animal creation.

1st. *The human soul in its original state, demands our attention.*

The goodness of God will appear very conspicuously, if we consider the soul of Adam, our common progenitor, as created on the sixth day. As the intellectual nature of man is the most excellent part of any of the works of this lower world, so we should naturally conclude, that it would be the nearest resemblance of its Author. And with such a conclusion, the following scriptural account is entirely accordant. "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him." The Lord is a Spirit, or an intelligent Being, whose understanding is infinite. The soul, or intelligence of

man is finite, a mere image of the omnipresent invisible Jehovah. And as the Lord is supremely holy, and most righteous in all his ways, so we are taught that God made man upright.

The dominion of man originally over the animals of the earth, may be considered as a part of the divine image; for by it he resembled the supreme Being in his authority and government. Thus all mankind bear the natural image of their Maker, as they are intelligent beings; and our first parents were created after his moral image, in a state of perfect holiness. How happy, then, must have been such a state; how much resembling that of the holy and blessed angels! The soul of Adam was doubtless more capacious than the souls of any of his offspring; and his means of improvement and advancement must have been far superior to those of any of his fallen race. This is evident from the consideration, that sin introduces natural evils, mental as well as bodily.

Whether our first parents had a language, suited to their original state, furnished in a supernatural manner, we cannot tell. However, that they had such a language, and correspondent knowledge, reason would teach as well as scripture. The description of Adam's giving names to all the animals of the earth, will throw much light on this subject. "Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam, to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field." Hence he had a vast knowledge of God, of his law, his will, and his works, as is manifested in this instance, of his giving names to all the living creatures, suitable to their natures, at the first sight of them.

The idea which some entertain, that Adam, though very happy, had but little knowledge, is en-

tirely groundless, and every way inconsistent. It is founded perhaps on the expression of Satan : "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." But what must be the proper import of such a temptation ? Truly this : Eat of the forbidden fruit, and your extensive knowledge and enlarged views will be supernaturally augmented ; and ye, who are but little lower than the angels, will at once be equal to them. The serpent, from dread experience, knew that the suggestion of the highest possible attainments of knowledge, would be the most likely to excite ambition in the heart of one of a capacious mind, and of clear and sublime views.

"Aspiring to be Gods, if Angels fell ;
Aspiring to be Angels, men rebel."

How extensive the capacity, how great the knowledge, how holy and happy must have been our first parents, while in that blessed situation, the garden of Eden ! They had all earthly felicity, and enjoyed unbroken communion with their God. The race of Adam do indeed have souls inferior to him, in consequence of the diseases both of the mind and of the body. But when we consider the human soul as in a state of innocence, a living, holy image of its Creator, the divine goodness shines conspicuously ; for the Lord himself saw that it was made very good.

2dly. *If we compare the human body in its original state and present condition, the divine wisdom and goodness will be very manifest.*

No doubt Adam had the most regular bodily form, and the most beautiful and interesting countenance, of any man that ever lived. Originally, not only the human soul, but the human body also, was in a state of perfection. Then was man the immediate offspring of God, and he breathed air so pure, that his inferior nature was not subject to sickness and mortality. By reason of sin, every manner of disease, and death itself, have entered

the world. Hence, the beauty, vigour, and activity of the animal frame are greatly degenerated. Irregular forms and features, constitutional diseases, and the prevalent distempers of mortals, are the effect of human apostacy. This, and more than this, is implied in the expression, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Human bodies are become degenerate by irregular, sensual desires, by sinful passions and vitiated appetite. All the affections and passions of man in his original state, were for good. His reason and appetite were in perfect unison. But how sadly reversed the present state! Constitutional sins do frequently originate from the irregularities of the human body; hence the minds of many are excited by what is denominated the *right eye* sin, from some of the defects or irregularities of the animal frame. Many have their minds greatly beclouded and depressed nearly all their days, on the account of some local complaint, or perhaps a variety of bodily maladies. But the healthful and vigorous body of Adam, and the perfect state of the various senses, would be almost constant inlets of entertainment, and sources of joy. Had he not apostatized from God, his body would never have fallen a prey to death, but would probably have been translated, like the bodies of Enoch and Elijah, or instantly changed into a spiritual body, like the change that shall be produced in those who shall be on the earth at the time of the sounding of the last trump.

Originally the human frame was a most beautiful temple, containing a perfect human soul. But now it is a decaying tabernacle, inhabited by a degenerate apostate spirit. Not only was the soul of man made after the image of God, but a most perfect human body was formed to be its suitable companion and partner. "The human countenance originally embraced the greatest variety of exquisite beauties, which could be found within the

same compass. The perfectly fine tints of the complexion, the completely noble form and proportions of the features, the unequalled expressions of intelligence and of honourable and virtuous emotions, which were constantly exhibited in a great variety of dignified and delicate movements, must have rendered it the most interesting object in nature." This is fairly inferred from the expression, "Behold, it was very good." Then far more excellent and desirable was the original, than the present state of the corporeal system; and how conspicuous the goodness of God!

3dly. *The world itself, originally, was pronounced superlatively good, and as such should be viewed by man.*

The earth in its pristine state, was a globe beautifully formed, and well calculated for the support of animals, and for the convenience of man. In its present condition it is greatly altered, and wonderfully changed. It is far more irregular and rugged than it was, when pronounced very good. Inundations and earthquakes have made havock with certain parts of the world. The flood, especially, has desolated the whole surface. We read of high hills and mountains, before this catastrophe; but they would not compare with the present as to their dreariness. They were not too stately to render a most agreeable variety either to charm the eye, or to be most productive. In consequence of sin, not only the moral but the natural world is greatly degenerated; for the earth itself is cursed for man's sake. We may well bless the Lord, that we have his footstool, even in its present state, for our abode; but yet how must it once have been far more excellent and desirable!

"Sin blasted all the bloom and beauty of the primitive state, and changed the garden of God into a desolate wilderness. Hence the world, originally the similitude of heaven, now bears the traces of hell."

4thly. *The condition of man, and all things around him, were originally very good ; but in his present state they are greatly reversed.*

Adam had a garden whose soil was most fertile ; and all the requisite labour would only serve to render him healthy, active, and cheerful. Delightful his situation ! for out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree, that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Though we frequently behold the face of nature clothed with verdant beauty, yet its scenery was once far more beautiful and delightsome. But how are labour and vexation, sorrow and grief, now visible throughout the world which lieth in wickedness ! Awfully true the denunciation, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it, all the days of thy life ; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee ; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field : In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.” Hence the unpleasant excesses of climate, and the infected atmosphere, are a judgement from heaven, for man’s transgression. For the same reason the beasts become savage towards man. How submissive were they, and inoffensive, before the fall ! Now, many of them are ready to destroy the lord of this lower world ; and they fear him not only for his intelligent countenance, but also for his wicked looks. The beasts of the field, and even the elements, are now hostile and set in array against him.

When considering the manifold miseries of this life, does any one imagine that the divine goodness is greatly eclipsed ? This subject will teach him to contemplate the world and all things therein, on the sixth day, when the Lord pronounced them all very good. Then will he behold the beauties and wonders of paradise ; and the same state would have continued to this day, with glorious improvement, had not sin entered this world. The evils and direful calamities of this life, must ne^t be

imputed a reproach to the divine goodness, but to man. His revolt from his God has immersed him in all the miseries of this life, and exposed him to the woes of the life to come. But notwithstanding the sins of the world are so heinous as to call aloud for speedy vengeance, through the divine grace, mercy, and forbearance of God, how manifold is the divine beneficence! What a continued series of varied favours does Heaven confer even on the evil and unthankful! Yet how much brighter was the original state of things, when all were perfection, were superlatively excellent in the view of their great Creator.

REMARKS.

1st. *If this subject has reflected some light on the works of creation, concerning the goodness of God, then let us notice the necessity and excellence of divine revelation, as a superior manifestation of his benevolence.*

When we consider, that the great First Cause has not only given existence to matter, but also to mind, we may conclude, that a revelation from God to man is possible. Surely, he who created intelligent beings, can reveal himself to them, or excite ideas in their minds by his immediate agency, without the intervention of means or second causes. The same power, which produced the human mind by an immediate positive agency, can furnish the mind with clear and distinct ideas by the same agency, which is implied in the term, *revelation*.

And truly a revelation from God to man is very desirable. Our first parents in a state of innocence, might reason from the works of creation, that their Creator is great, powerful, intelligent, and benevolent; and that they ought to love a being so glorious and munificent. But, without a revelation from God, it does not appear that they would know how they should worship him, that they might express their love in the most suitable manner. Nei-

ther could they know whether their Creator designed them for immortality. And if they should believe this, they could not tell, whether this world would be their eternal home, or whether they should enter another state of existence. When they felt hunger, they might draw some rational conclusions that it would be lawful for them to partake of the fruits of the earth for their support ; but could they safely infer, that they might take the beasts of the field for food ? How could they determine with certainty, that the animals of the earth, although in different grades below them, were not rational, accountable, and immortal creatures ? Even in the primitive state of uprightness, a revelation was desirable and needful ; but far more so, since mankind are in a fallen, blinded, and ruined condition ; for it makes known the only possible way of salvation.

To be sensible of the great importance of a divine revelation, we should not only turn our thoughts to those who enjoy it, and all its consequent advantages, but should contemplate the deplorable situation of those, who are destitute of its enlightening influence. That many of the nations, or tribes of the earth, are at present in a benighted, forlorn condition, no person of information can deny ; and the same might be said concerning all past ages. When we consider the strange worship of Heathen nations, their base and scandalous sacrifices for the making of an atonement for sin, that they may pacify their offended deities, we have existing evidence of the necessity of a divine revelation to point out to lost man the way of salvation. Without such a supernatural gift, fallen, guilty man would be unable to tell, whether a holy and righteous God could forgive sinners ; or, if he could, whether he would grant pardon, and on what terms. They could have no certainty merely by repenting : and they could not possibly tell what atonement would be necessary. This required wisdom far beyond that of men or of angels.

The contents of the sacred writings, serve to evince their divine original. The things revealed are perfectly creditable and consistent, and form an extensive and harmonious scheme. The doctrines and duties disclosed are not repugnant to the law of nature, but consonant to reason and conscience, though far superiour. Finite, short sighted man may imagine, the sacred volume contains many things unnecessary, and which are not worthy to be included in a revelation from God. But, although some make objections to the sacred writings, because they do not exactly accord to their notions; nevertheless they do the same concerning the works of creation and providence. And, as they do not see the wisdom of many of the works of nature, hence an argument may be derived in favour of the authenticity of the sacred writings; because they were given to man gradually, and analogous to the other divine works.

From the fulfilment of prophecies may be derived a convincing argument to show that revelation is truly divine. Finite beings can only conjecture, they cannot foretel what events will come to pass. To have a perfect view of futurity, or to foreknow the things which are to take place, is the prerogative of Deity. Hence the completion of the prophecies carries convincing evidence that the writers were divinely inspired. Manifold important events, and to human view improbable, have been foretold and fulfilled, even in the minutest circumstances.

Many noted miracles have also been wrought as a confirmation of the reality of revelation being divine. They were effected on publick occasions, and appealed immediately to the senses of men, as the highest evidence which could be given, or demanded. They were wrought for very important purposes, and evinced that the messages, which the inspired penman delivered, were revealed to them from heaven, and should be received as coming with the declaration and authority of Jehovah.

Now, if the system of creation is the book of nature, proclaiming in every part the wondrous greatness, and wisdom, and goodness of its Author; yet, unparalleled are the pages of that divine volume, which unfolds the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. "And from the sure word of prophecy we derive the glad tidings, that the word of God shall rise superior to all opposition, and shall go down with the revolving ages of time, enlightening the faith, enlivening the hope, enkindling the love, inflaming the zeal, and directing the ways of man, till the world shall be no more."

2dly. *This subject may lead us to see the odious nature and destructive tendency of sin.*

How has it changed both the moral and natural world! What dreadful devastations has it made! What a sad alteration has it produced in the condition of man, and in the very animals, as well as in the earth itself! Every groan or painful sensation, and all the woes of the earth, announce sin to be exceeding sinful. They are not mere calamities sent upon feeble and innocent mortals, but the judgements of heaven upon an ungodly world, who seek any thing rather than to know, and love, and serve the only living and true God.

3dly. How glorious the plan of redemption! What a mercy, that man, ruined by sin, may be delivered from its dominion here, and from its curse hereafter! What a privilege that the soul may be renewed by grace, enjoy the communion of its Maker, and at last, be for ever blessed with the fulness of his love! Is any one afflicted with the various calamities of life? How should hope beam in his soul, that he be delivered from both temporal and eternal evils! How should he seek to be an inhabitant of the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and where all things are in perfection the most consummate and glorious!

SERMON II.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN IDENTITY.

ACTS XVII. 26.

*And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell
on all the face of the earth.*

VARIOUS are the views of mankind respecting the peculiarities of the human race. Some conclude, that all human beings are not of the same descent. Others, assenting to this, attribute their differences of colour, features, &c. to causes essentially different; ordinary and miraculous. A few look upon the blacks as the descendants of Cain, and account their colour as a signal judgement from heaven, for the murder of his brother Abel. This idea is the tradition of persons overlooking the event of the flood. Many consider them as having sprung from Ham, the second son of Noah; and think they are marked as a punishment for his disrespectful conduct towards his father. But, if in either case a miracle had been wrought, we should doubtless have an event so noted, recorded in the divine word. Revelation is, however, silent in this respect, although human identity is abundantly established. Happy for us that we have such a blessed volume to enlighten our understandings, in relation to many important events which reason could never satisfactorily unfold. From these few remarks, I pass to the discussion of the present interesting and important subject.

In the words of the text, with those in connexion, we are taught the identity of the human race. "God, that made the world and all things therein,

seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

These words teach us that all mankind, throughout all the world, are of the same origin ; or, in other words, that God created Adam and Eve, and that from them the whole family of man have descended. But mankind exist under such different varieties of stature, of complexion, and of features, that we might inconsiderately be led to conclude, they are not all of the same descent, had we not the word of God for our guide.

But, if we carefully investigate the subject, we may see, that the identity of the human race, is a doctrine the most consistent with the principles of sound philosophy ; for radically different species of human beings must be subject to diverse laws, both in the physical and moral constitution of their nature. Destroy this unity, and no certain, universal principles remain—we should have no general and infallible standard, by which to judge of the moral ideas and habits of different nations, or even of different men. Multiplicity of facts testify, that philosophy delights, in tracing the most diversified results through various combinations, to the most simple elements. And if the laws of nature, dissimilar climes and states of society, are found sufficient to impress on the same original constitution of man all the varieties of complexion, form, and features, which have distinguished the race, it is an homage which we owe to philosophy, as well as to religion, to refer all the different nations of the earth to the same original stock.

If human nature actually embraces manifold species of human beings, let it be asked, by what criterion shall we distinguish them ? What is their num-

ber? Is it five, or five hundred? To what climate is any species necessarily restricted? or what are the infallible characteristicks of distinction?

According to a wise and benignant intention of Providence, we see mankind continually changing their habitations, and making their residence in all the diversified climes of the habitable globe. They are found under every zone, from the equator to the pole, not only able to endure all these varied degrees of temperature without essential injury, but so assimilated by time to the peculiarities of the inhabitants of each new climate, that we cannot with certainty pronounce, who are descendants of the aborigines of the country, and who, from families migrated thither only a few generations past.

Why should it be thought necessary, that the Creator should have formed different species of men to inhabit the frozen regions of Lapland, and the torrid climes of Africa, when it is confessed by one of the greatest champions of this sentiment,* that a colony of Hungarians, who are among the handsomest and best proportioned people of Europe, have, by migrating to Lapland, some ages ago, become absolutely assimilated to the natives of the country, in every attribute of that diminutive and deformed race? And the same author asserts, that a colony of Portuguese, established in Congo, not yet three centuries since, have so degenerated in complexion, in the figure of their persons, and their habits of living, as to be no longer distinguishable from the neighbouring tribes of Hottentots, who are among the filthiest, the most deformed and savage of mankind.

In establishing the identity of the human race, I shall take a cursory view of some of the characteristicks of a human being, common to all nations, but essentially distinct and incomparably superior to any of the peculiarities of the species of animals, even those of the highest grades.

* Lord Kaines.

1st. *Human reason and improvement characterize all human beings.*

The faculties of man develope gradually, and his progression knows no limits. His understanding and moral powers, and his knowledge of the arts and sciences, as to all their diversified relations of useful attainments, may be ever advancing towards their perfection. But, because the animals of the earth possess not the guidance of reason and the defence of improvement, the Creator has endued them for their safety with a proportionably greater number of instincts than man. With what uniformity each animal pursues that course of life, for which it was destined; how unerringly it selects that food, which is proper for its subsistence, and constructs those habitations, which are adapted to its state and its necessities !

On the other hand, man, destitute of the nice and accurate instincts of animals, as well as of the effectual means which they possess, of procuring their provision, must have been the most forlorn of all creatures, although destined to be lord of this lower world, were he not an intelligent being, essentially exalted in his very nature, and of vastly superior improvable faculties. What may be the essential difference between the intellectual reason of a human being, and the sensitive operations of reasoning in an animal, appertains not to me at present to describe. Suffice it to say, the understanding in man and his conscience, constitute him an intelligent and accountable being.

We behold one class of beings, and only one, dwelling on all the face of the earth, capable of constant and useful progression. None of the animals are essentially benefitted as to their faculties or situation, by age and experience. But man, as to all his diversified tribes, and the improvement of seventy years, scarcely makes a beginning, as it respects the knowledge, and the noble objects, to which he may attain. At death, his advances to-

wards perfection are nipt in the bud. What a characteristick, what a pre-eminence then, have all mankind, above all the other creatures which exist on our globe !

2dly. *The figure of the human body is essentially different from all animal bodies.*

Man, as it respects his corporeal frame, evidently holds the first rank in relation to the species of animals. He is distinguished from them also in a very striking manner by the erectness of his form, as well as by its being a more completely organized and finished piece of divine mechanism. See the beasts naturally bending towards the earth, as if created for the purpose of grovelling in the dust, and solely its kindred. But see man, from the erectness of his posture by nature, looking towards the heavens, as if of higher birth, and destined at last to soar on high. By an infinite number of muscles and articulations in the structure of the human frame, man is capable of a far greater variety of easy movements and useful purposes, than any of the animal species, particularly in the nicer operations of the arts, without which they could neither have been invented nor practised. The human body, in its various members, and in the symmetry of the whole, exhibits remarkably pleasing and elegant proportions. Its adaptation to perform delicate and useful operations, plainly evinces the intention of the Creator to favour the cultivation of all the arts necessary for the purposes of life, for convenience and ornament.

The varied clothing of the animals of the earth, is in direct contrast to that of man. All animals are clothed by the gift of nature ; but the garments of man are the work of art. And this is one grand characteristick mark, by which they may easily be distinguished. Thus we may be led to see by contrast, that the figure and condition of the human body are strikingly different from all animal bodies.

3dly. *The human countenance is essentially different from that of any of the animals.*

Some animals have a visage far more engaging than others; yet how insignificant the appearance, compared with the beautiful and interesting countenance of a human being! Some animals by their looks discover docility; some, cunning; and others, sagacity; but intelligence, with far superior paintings, is delineated on the fine and delicate lines of the human countenance. The variety of ideas and emotions continually arising in the mind, communicates to the countenance a habit of quick and various flexibility, which renders it capable of expressing suddenly upon the features, every thought. Says Dr. Smith,* Expression, in a low degree, belongs even to the animals. This we know; for we see them brighten with joy, and gambol with pleasure: they languish in sickness, and writhe in pain. Their eyes sometimes sparkle with love, or flash with rage; and even the tear of distress may be seen to roll down their cheeks. But the expression of the human countenance is incomparably more various than that of any animal. Such is the mysterious union and sympathy between the human soul and body, that, in the delicate and flexible human countenance there is hardly the slightest movement or emotion of the mind which has not its external character or symbol. Thus even the looks and features, though a silent, are an impressive language. Time will not allow me to treat of the diversity and beautiful intermixture of colour, and its varied changes in a human countenance, which, by contrast, we discern to be evidently and strikingly different from that of any of the animals.

The features are, however, greatly affected by the existing state of society; and, with the refinement of its manners, susceptible of extraordinary degrees of cultivation. That dull and inflexible gloom and vacancy of countenance, which distin-

* To whose writings I am indebted for the substance of this subject.

guish savage life, are the necessary consequence of vacuity of thought. The few occasions that occur, to call the various talents of the mind into rigorous operation, necessarily leave it to languish in a state of inaction. Thus in a savage we see nature in its original rudeness, without the added powers of art and science. But, as society advances in its progress, as invention and calculation are encouraged, and the interchange of thought accelerated, the mind, in its perceptions, becomes more quick and penetrating.

All the features of the human countenance are modified, and its whole expression, in a great measure, formed by the state of society, in which men exist. Every idea and every emotion, which are excited in the mind, affect, in some degree, the human visage, the index of our feelings, and contribute to form its infinitely various lineaments. Paucity of ideas, and of objects to call forth the understanding or the passions, marks the countenance with a vacant and unmeaning aspect. Agreeable and cultivated scenes enliven and animate the features, and tend to render them regular, soft and refined. Wild and solitary forests impress on the countenance some image of its own rudeness. The infinitely diversified attentions of men, in polished society, give great flexibility and the most delicate variety to the expression of the countenance.

4thly. *The human voice is a criterion by which man may be readily distinguished from any of the animals of the earth.*

Speech is the prerogative of man, a faculty of which no animal can be taught to participate. Animals can make those varied sounds, which are necessary to call their young, or give them warning of their danger; yet the power of communicating thoughts by words, belongs to man alone. No animal has ever had the faculty of speech; but all the tribes of human beings have enjoyed this gift. Language, as to the characters and structure, is diffe-

rent in different nations; still the great end is the same in all, to express the thoughts of the mind by words.

The voice of man, in singing the praises of his Maker, is far superiour to the musical sounds of any animal, both for melody and sentiment. The birds of the air warble their pleasant notes; but they have not the power of articulate harmony. Vocal musick is impressively instructing and highly pleasing. Let us call to mind some person that is dumb, and then we may have some just views of the vast superiority and striking difference, which exist between the power of the human voice, and those mere sounds of nature, of which animals are capable. The gift of speech, with that of musick, is one of the greatest blessings, both for entertainment and benefit, ever conferred on man as it respects his animal frame. And although animals can make sounds necessary to their situation, yet the human voice is a criterion, by which man may be readily distinguished from any of the animals of the earth.

Some of the most prominent characteristicks of human identity have been noticed. There are many and definite traits, by which all mankind are distinguished as of one species of beings. I would mention the peculiarities of the eyes, nose, forehead, cheeks, mouth, chin, and the covering of the head. The formation of the hands, fingers, and nails, the calf of the leg, and the feet, may be considered as among the numerous class of distinctions. But a sufficient number of particulars has been brought to view and illustrated to establish the present subject, the identity of man.

REMARKS.

1st. *The most debased human beings are of high destination.*

The present subject is highly worthy of attention. Its principles are as old as the bible, and as

ancient as the creation of the first human pair. They are as interesting as the present prospects and future destinies of immortal beings accountable to the bar of God. They are deeply interwoven, and essentially connected with the whole of divine revelation. How important is it to have an indisputable line of distinction drawn between the highest grade of the animal creation, and the lowest class of human beings ! As the volume of divine truth is addressed to man ; so, whether high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, black or white, all their peculiarities of situation have an influence in forming the intellectual and moral character, and a consequent relation to the great judgement day. Are any disgusted with the view of the debased state and humble lot of some of the human race ? Rather let humility possess their souls, and due praise be given to the Author of every good and perfect gift, for their own elevated rank and exalted privileges. It is truly an interesting and most solemn reflection, that so many millions of human beings as have peopled the globe, and as now dwell on all the face of the earth, should have their genealogy from that once holy and happy pair, whose abode was paradise. How vast, astonishing, and manifold are the works of God, and how worthy the study and admiration of man, who is made after his image !

2dly. *If the identity of the human race is established, then all mankind are brethren.*

They have all the same original parents ; are all one family, made of the same fellow clay, and endued with the same constituent faculties, both bodily and mental. They all partake of the same human flesh and blood ; have common wants and common interests. They have all the same human principles implanted in them by nature ; and are each one accountable to the same Judge for the improvement of his talents, and for all his moral conduct. Do we sometimes behold a fellow mortal

of inferior bodily and mental accomplishments, perhaps a black slave, or a wandering native? We may well exercise the feelings of compassion and sympathy, for such an one is our brother. Blood as precious as ours runs through his veins. He must die, and after death be an inhabitant of heaven or hell, as well as we. Yes, reader, as you and I have souls to be saved or lost, so have all our fellow mortals, however varied their complexion or condition, and in what part soever of the habitable globe they live. Then,

3dly. *How desirable, that they enjoy privileges in common with us.*

How friendly, that we reach forth a helping hand to raise those that are sunk into the lowest depths of human degradation! Can we highly prize our own immunities, and not feel anxious that the destitute enjoy the same blessings? How would the prospect of the intellectual and moral world be brightened, if all nations enjoyed the social, civil, and religious advantages which Heaven has conferred upon us! The face of nature would seem to be changed, while pagans and heathens would be exalted in point of privilege, and the declarative glory of God promoted.

SERMON III.

PECULIARITIES CONSISTENT WITH IDENTITY.

ACTS XVII. 26.

*And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell
on all the face of the earth.*

THIS expression, it has been observed, teaches us, that all human beings upon the globe, have the same kind of animal life, and are descended from the same original parents. But the present discourse is designed, from natural and moral causes, to reconcile those peculiarities of figure, of features, and complexion, which exist among the different nations of the human species. Some of the principal varieties in the aspect of mankind, will be noticed.

A few preliminary remarks are requisite to prepare the way for their particular discussion.

Men frequently deceive themselves in relation to this subject, by bringing together at once the most distant extremes, without particularly tracing the intermediate grades, which, in every step of the progression, touch upon one another. Noticing extremities, they are surprised by their dissimilarity; but, passing along the minute gradations, which serve to unite them, the mind perceives in this wide difference merely the result of the actions of the same physical laws in the diversity of birth, in successive climates, and in the varied, circumstantial positions of the human race, as to the state of society.

The Negro and the European are the two extremes of a very long gradation. Between them are almost innumerable, intermediate stages, which differ from each other no more than the individuals occasionally produced in every nation or family, differ from the generality of the same nation or family.

In features as in colour, the different tribes are connected to each other by the most gentle gradations; so that, although any two extremes, when contrasted, appear strikingly different; yet, they are joined by numerous intermediate and very slightly different degrees; and no formation is exhibited so constantly in all the individuals of one tribe as not to admit of numerous exceptions.

The great diversity of nature's productions at birth, proves, that sameness of colour is not an essential characteristick of species; or, that identity of tint is not necessary to establish descent from a common stock. In the same family of children is often seen great diversity in many respects. Complexion, light, sandy, and dark—eyes, greyish, blue, and dark brown—the hair, fair, red, and black. Other peculiarities might be named.

The numerous examples of the widest deviation in colour, in animals confessedly of the same species, fully authorize us to conclude, that the complexion of the human race may be widely different. Let one instance be mentioned. Among the young of a pair of white rabbits may be found the several colours of white, gray, spotted, and black. Now this may be inferred by way of application. Though the human species be not subject to changes so immediate and sudden, nevertheless they may eventually be as great.

It will be of importance to bear in mind throughout this discourse, that the causes, affecting the physical or moral constitution of man, and finally producing great distinctions between nations, seldom attain their full operation, till after a long se-

ries of time. Even several generations may pass away, before the influences of the climate, of the state of society, or of the manner of living, are perceived in their ultimate results. At length, however, their effects enter deeply into the habits and whole structure of human nature, and are transmitted from parents to their offspring. The sanguine or fair complexion will, for this reason, be perpetual in the higher latitudes of the temperate zone; and we shall generally find different shades of the dark colours gradually increasing, till we arrive at the entire black, as we descend to the equator.

1st. *Let us now take a view of some of the fairest complexions of any people upon the globe.*

But such inhabitants must be found, where climate is congenial by its temperature ; and where the cultivation of the arts and sciences is carried to its greatest perfection. Some of the Europeans, and of the Americans in the United States, are intended. Their residence is in the northern, temperate zone, where climate is favourable to a fair and ruddy complexion ; and where learning and polished society are calculated to produce lively and interesting features in the countenance. The inhabitants have by no means uniformity in all respects, as their circumstances and opportunities are greatly varied in the same country. Some local situations, states of society, and modes of living, are far more favourable than others for the exertion of the mental powers, for refinement of manners, and for forming constitutional habits and complexion. And where a people have long cultivated the arts and sciences, and refined manners, with success, a general aptitude becomes hereditary among their descendants. Thus this influence and these effects will in some degree be communicated from posterity to posterity. Birth and education do often peculiarize different societies, and even individuals of the same family. Besides, the distinguished privileges, salubrious climate, and manner of liv-

ing, give the superiority to some nations over others, for stature, features, and complexion.

Every species of plants and animals may be distinguished by certain constituent principles, as well as the human family by any peculiar and general characteristicks; notwithstanding, we see nature, in all her productions, prone to every possible diversity. Both uniformity and variety characterize all her operations.

Children of the same parents are frequently born under circumstances of great dissimilitude. Need I mention the case of Esau and Jacob? Suffer me to notice the instance of two young ladies who were my pupils, and twins also. The one, as to her complexion, was the fairest of the fair; her hair beautifully fine and straight. The countenance of the other was singularly dark, and her hair very black, also naturally curly. Should the peculiarities of the latter be increased in equal degrees to the fourth generation, there would be descendants, aside from the influence of climate, completely of the negro cast. The father of these two females had black hair, and eyes dark brown. The features of the mother exhibited a sandy shade. Abundant facts within our observation, testify, that in every nation, and even in the same family, nature operates with much diversity in her productions.

2dly. *Some peculiarities of other nations demand attention.*

The Esquimaux, the Laplanders, the Samoiedes, and the northern tribes of the Tartars, have their head and breast unusually large, the neck uncommonly short, the eyes, hands, and feet, remarkably small. The cause is doubtless owing chiefly to the climate; as they live in the northern parts of the globe, in which regions intense and almost perpetual cold reigns. The natural effect of a clime so rigorous, is to restrain the growth and expansion of the limbs most remote from the centre

of warmth and circulating heat in the body. The consequence is, the size of the hands and feet is greatly diminished, while the head and breast, which receive a more forcible impulse of the blood, become proportionably enlarged. And as these are so greatly expanded, the neck is apparently shortened. Moreover, the inhabitants of those cold regions are habitually shrugging their shoulders to protect their necks from the uncomfortable effects of intense frost and piercing winds; so that their heads seem to rest on their breast, or sunk down below their shoulders. This appearance is what gave rise to the fable of tribes who had no necks. But should any of us be removed to those keen regions of the north, we should readily contract their habits, and by the intensity of the cold, begin to be assimilated to them; and, in a few generations, should partake of all their peculiarities.

For illustration, suppose a tree in a warm climate have a long and slender body, and very extended limbs. Let a young shoot of the same be transplanted in a much colder region, and reproduced for a few centuries; the trunk of the tree would become shorter and thicker, and its branches not so extensively spread.

Thus, in consequence of the unremitting constriction of cold, a particular habit of body, or disposition of features, is gradually incorporated into the system, and gives a form to the person, and lineaments to the features, more or less strongly marked, as far as the cause efficiently operates. On this same principle we may account for the dark and brown complexion, and for the coarseness and roughness of the countenances of the inhabitants of the frozen regions. Their rough and harsh features are the natural result of the corrugations and distortions occasioned by the climate. Even in our own temperature, when a person is exposed to the severities of a bleak north wind, for only one hour, how is his visage changed by a

momentary roughness and brownness. Hence, coarse living, unpolished society, and rigour of climate, are reasons sufficient to account for all the peculiarities and irregularities of complexion, features, and stature, which characterize the inhabitants of the regions of the north.

3dly. *I shall now treat of the aborigines of this country.*

Their state of society is such, that climate and their usual manner of living produce very deteriorating effects. A savage, seldom enjoying the protection even of a poor hut, and often compelled to lodge on the bare earth, under the open sky, imbibes the influence of the sun and atmosphere at every pore of his body. The American Indian inhabits an uncultivated forest, abounding with stagnant water, and covered with a luxuriant growth of vegetables, which fall down and corrupt on the spot where they grew. He generally pitches his wigwam by the side of a river, that he may enjoy the conveniences of fishing as well as of hunting. The vapour of rivers, therefore, which are often greatly obstructed in their course by the trees fallen, and the leaves collected in their channels, the exhalations of marshes, and the noxious gases evolved from decaying vegetables, impregnate the whole atmosphere, and give a deep bilious tinge to the complexion of the savage. And the sun, acting immediately upon the skin in this state, necessarily impresses on it a very dark hue.

The darkness of the complexion is still further increased in consequence of the frequent fumigations, by which they are obliged to guard against the annoyance of innumerable insects, which swarm in undrained and uncultivated countries; and by the smoke with which their huts, small and unskillfully built, are constantly filled. Smoke discolours every object long exposed to its action by insinuating itself into the pores, and adhering strongly to the surface. Hence it contributes somewhat to

heighten the effect of so many other discolouring causes on the complexion of the American savages.

The hardships of their condition, their scanty and meagre food, weaken and exhaust the principle of life. They are sometimes left to want from the uncertainty of their provision; and, on other occasions, being furnished with a superfluity, they are tempted to overstrain themselves by a surfeit. Besides, their entire inattention to the cleanliness of their persons and their huts, has its influence to heighten the disagreeable duskiness of their colour, and to render their features coarse and deformed. Hence it results, that savages never can be entirely fair; and from the similarity of their situations and habits, they must be, in all climates, of a similar complexion.

Nothing but a skilful agriculture can perfectly purify the air from the insalubrious exhalations, created by the causes already mentioned. All uncultivated countries tend to produce a bilious habit, and a dark complexion, in the savages who range them. Hence it is, that in civilized society alone we meet with some instances among them of strong and muscular bodies, and of regular and agreeable features.

4thly. *The Jews will be next taken into consideration.*

As the Jews have inhabited every climate, that is not extremely cold, so they have changed their complexion in every case, and acquired some likeness in colour, form and features, to the people among whom they have for a long time lived. The idea which some entertain of their existing with the contrast of colours white and black, is incorrect. It is not proper to divide them into the two classes of white Jews and black Jews. They are dispersed through every country in the world, and have four differences of complexion; the fair, the swarthy, the olive, and black. In whatever region they are found, they are marked with the peculiar

colour of the natives. The Jews, who live in Britain and Germany, and who are the descendants of past generations in the same nations, have an intermixture of a fair and ruddy complexion, nearly resembling that of the English and Germans. Those of Spain and Portugal are swarthy, but little varied from the features of the Spaniards and Portuguese. In Syria, they, like the Syrians, are nearly of an olive colour. But in India they are said to be black. However, they have not the blackness of the African countenance, although they are peculiarly dark. But to what shall we ascribe the very different shades of complexion, if not to dissimilarity at birth, the varieties of climate, manner of living, and other concomitant circumstances? They are known to be the descendants of one family, and to have but very few intermarriages with other nations. The diversity of the manner, in which the Jews are found to exist, in different countries and climates, may serve to show, that there may be great differences of features and complexion among mankind, even from natural and moral causes. Hence a strong argument for human identity, that all are the descendants of our first common parents.

5thly. *The Arabians and Chinese serve to illustrate the influence of climate on the complexion.*

These people have remained from a very remote antiquity, almost wholly unmixed with foreign nations. The former, especially, can be traced by a clear and undisputed genealogy to their origin in one family; and they have never been blended, either by conquest, or by commerce, with any other race. And yet we find every gradation of discolouration among them, from the swarthy hue of the northern provinces, to the deep black, suffused with a yellowish tinge, which prevails in the southern extremity of the Arabian peninsula.

The present subject may be happily illustrated, from the consideration of the features of the ori-

ginal progenitor of the human race. As the term Adam, is significant of red earth, so his complexion should not be considered of the fair cast. The natives of this country are, with a degree of propriety, sometimes denominated red men. The most interesting countenances of the Arabians and Chinese, are of a reddish or delicately dark tinge; and surely such lineaments in the human face are entirely congenial to the climate, in which our first parents were placed. And, if similar then were their features, the same arguments from circumstances of birth, climate, and other concomitant circumstances, which will account, in a retrograde course, for the far lighter shades of complexion among some nations of their offspring, would, by contrast, show, that others must also become as much darker. The most rational reflection on the very situation and the natural hue of the skin of Adam and Eve, induces the belief, that their descendants would eventually be black on the one hand, as well as of the most delicate fair on the other.

It is worthy of remark, that in a hot climate man becomes dark in his complexion and black; because such a colour transmits the light, so that the surface is not heated by reaction. In this case, a copious perspiration is continued, and much heat carried off by the perspirable fluids, which tends to the preservation of health. Hence even nature herself dictates, that white, or the fair, is not a proper complexion for the skin in a sultry climate, since, by reflecting the light, the exterior would be heated by resistance, and the perspiration checked.

6thly. *The blacks of Africa, and their descendants among other nations, demand our attention.*

Their sullen and dejected looks, and their coarsely wrinkled visage, present a picture of the effects of a fervid sun upon the head and body. The silly and idiotick countenance which is frequently observed in the wretched natives of Africa, evinces

the effect of the pain and the faintness occasioned by the intense rays of a vertical sun beating upon them. Do they appear inferior in the view of some, compared with our own highly favoured nation, and scarcely worthy to be ranked among human beings? But what might not these degraded creatures be in a few centuries, were they to possess our situations of climate, of society, and moral improvement? In considering this class of mankind, let us view them as inhabitants of the torrid zone, brought up in poverty of diet, degrading ignorance, and filthiness in the manner of living, which tend greatly to debase the corporeal system, and debilitate the mind.

A peculiarity of the Africans, which deserves to be noticed, is their hair resembling wool. But universal experience demonstrates, that climate has a powerful effect upon the hair, fur, or wool of all animals, to render it coarse or fine, spare or thick, according to the temperature of the region in which they are found. Why should not similar results be experienced by the human race, when exposed in like manner, as are the Africans? Nor is this a dire calamity of chance; but the care of a benevolent providence appears to be exercised towards the natives of this fervid zone. Doctor Smith says, the covering of their head is a substance that is properly neither wool nor hair, but somewhat between them, which is more comfortable to their person than either. It serves to protect the brain from the intense ardour of the sun, and does not, like hair, imbibe the perspirable moisture from the skin, which would render it, in that hot region, extremely unpleasant to the feeling and unsafe to the health. The colour and curl of the hair depend in a great measure upon a certain excrescence of that secretion in the skin, from which it derives its nutriment. Also, the evaporation of a volatile gas, rendering the surface quickly dry and disposed to contract, necessarily produces an invol-

tion or curling of the hair. It may be inquired, how comes the hair of the Africans to be so universally black ? I answer, other tribes, or nations of the torrid zone have black hair, almost universally.

Another peculiarity which should be mentioned, is the complexion of the Africans being so black, so widely different from that of the inhabitants of this country. It should be kept in mind, that the colour of the inhabitants of the torrid zone, is generally black, modified, however, by various circumstances, such as the elevation of mountains, the vicinity of seas, and the being open to wholesome, or exposed to scorching winds. As we advance towards the equator, we discern successively the various grades of dark complexion, from the swarthy to the blackest hue of the human skin. The features are most coarse and harsh in rigorous climates, and in a state of savage or barbarous manners, as among the natives of Africa.

That climate possesses a powerful influence on the complexion of nations, we may infer from the effect of the solar rays, and of the wind upon the human skin in our own mild and temperate latitude. If we advert to the situation of those persons, whose occupations habitually expose them to the action of the sun and of the open air; and that of those who, from their rank or fortune, are constantly shielded from these unpleasant influences, the effect becomes conspicuous and striking.

Let us now take for example a pair of twins in childhood, of fair and ruddy complexion. Suppose them to have so near a resemblance to each other as scarcely to be distinguished, even by the mother. The one is continued in school, and when out of the house, is sheltered from the various inclemencies of the weather. But the other spends his childhood in the labours of the field, exposed to the excesses of heat and cold. The one, in his youth, has the opportunities of academies and a

college for his improvement and refinement. The other passes his youthful days in the occupation of a sailor, and in the most barbarous ignorance. At the age of twenty, what a contrast of features! While the one has an interesting countenance and delicate fairness, the other is deeply tinctured with a rough and swarthy complexion.

But let the cliimax be continued. Instead of the partial exposure to which the latter is subjected by the short duration of our summer heats, suppose these were continued through the whole year, with the same intensity. Add to this, that his situation be in the ardour of the torrid zone to endure the rigours of the burning sands, and scorching, infectious winds. Let him be continued, a few centuries, by progeny in the interiour of Africa. What would be his sad appearance? what his dismal complexion? By such a comparison we may be led to conceive, that the blackness of the African hue is not greater than might be expected from the force and continuance of the diversity of natural and moral causes.

Besides the discolouration produced by the direct rays of the sun, naturalists inform us, that the effect of a torrid climate is very powerful on the action of the liver, the great laboratory of bile in the human system. This secretion is greatly augmented likewise by the superabundance of putrid effluvia, evolved in such regions from stagnant moisture, and from decaying vegetable substances. And as this is increased in quantity, it is said to heighten the black hue of the skin. These observations serve to show, that the peculiarities of the African race are consistent with human identity; or that they are of the same blood of the other nations of the earth, the descendants from the same original parents.

It may be replied, these arguments would be deemed sufficient, if it were not a matter of fact, that our own latitude does not alter the complexion

of the Africans, for they still continue black. But our northern, temperate climate, does materially change the features of those of the third and fourth generation. Though they hold their blackness, they have not that deep, gloomy, and sullen hue, which is a characteristick of those who have lately come from Africa. Then, if climate and manner of living do effect a change, though but slowly, instead of an objection against the present subject, it is an undeniable argument in its favour. The query may arise, how long would be necessary to reproduce an entire change? I answer, the reversion of any constitutional habit, features, or complexion of the body, would demand a much longer space of time fully to counteract them, than the acquiring of those habits would. If the Africans have been one thousand years in reaching their present state of existing peculiarities, should they now be placed under circumstances even the most favourable, probably ten thousand would be necessary to effect any considerable degree of reversion.

It is a fact, moreover, that the strong fetor of the African negro, is gradually becoming less offensive in his descendants in the United States; in those especially, who are accustomed to observe great particularity and cleanliness in their persons; and in the same degree also the close nap of their woolly hair is beginning to be relaxed.

Field and domestick slaves exhibit different degrees of African peculiarities. The children of the former are suffered to lie in the dust and ashes of their huts, or to roll in the burning sand before their doors, or in the open field beneath the ardent rays of the sun, nearly vertical. Hence their hair is not only closely coiled, but their very persons become contaminated with filthiness. As they are soon pressed with labour, and dejected by the humiliating circumstances of their servitude, so they have little ambition to improve their personal appearance. Thus their oppressed condition contri-

butes, in a great measure, to continue the deformities of their original climate.

The domestick servants, on the other hand, employed within the families of their masters, are fed and clothed far superiour to the field slaves. They receive correct ideas of elegance and beauty; and discover a great facility, in adopting polite manners. This class of slaves, therefore, has advanced far before the others, in acquiring the regular and agreeable features, and the expressive countenance, which can be formed only in the midst of civilized society. Their hair is often extended to three or four inches, and sometimes to a greater length. They frequently exhibit straight and well proportioned limbs, a capacity good, and look animated. Let a person visit the African infantile school in Philadelphia, or at Wilmington in Delaware, or the African schools in the city of New-York, he will see many children of talent, fine shape, and a countenance highly interesting.

The effect of a tropical zone is not wholly uniform. The Asiatick consists chiefly of water, which, absorbing the rays of the sun, and filling the atmosphere with a refrigerating vapour, renders the winds, that fan its numerous islands, and narrow peninsulas, comparatively temperate. The African is almost throughout its whole extent, a field of burning sand, which augments the heat of the sun to a degree, that can hardly be conceived by the inhabitants of the temperate latitudes.

In Africa itself, the eastern side of the continent is not so strongly marked with the negro peculiarities of complexion and features as the western, which may be explained by the uncommon elevation of the Abysinian Alps above the level of the sea, by the almost continual rains, prevailing there, for more than half the year, and by the continual impulse of the trade winds from the Indian ocean. But when these gales have traversed that burning zone for two thousand miles, collecting in

their passage all its fires, they fall upon its western side, glowing with an intensity, which is unknown in any other portion of the globe. We may, therefore, rationally conclude, the African negro is not changed by any peculiarities in a greater degree from the European, than diversity of birth, the laws of climate, and the influence of manners, as they have already been imperfectly illustrated, might lead us to expect.

I would add, that under the head of operating causes from the state of society, are comprehended diet, clothing, lodging, manners, government, arts, religion, agricultural improvements, habits of thinking, and ideas of all kinds naturally arising from such a state, great in number and variety. Now, if each of these causes be admitted to possess a small influence, in forming the character of the countenance, the different combinations and results of the whole must necessarily be considerable ; and united with the effects of climate, and other contingent circumstances, will afford sufficient principles, on which to account for all the varieties, that exist among mankind.

I shall conclude by presenting a synopsis of the present subject, in the form of propositions.

1. Nature delights in great varieties in every species of her productions among plants and animals, which is also manifest from the various dissimilitudes of man, even at his birth.

2. Different modes of living and of treatment, greatly affect the form, the features and complexion of nations, and even of individuals.

3. The solar rays and operation of the open air, when suffered to act immediately on the human skin, tend to produce a dark colour, although there should be no uncommon secretion of bile in the constitution.

4. On the other hand, redundancy of bile imparts a dark hue to the complexion, in persons who have not, in any uncommon degree, been exposed to the direct action of the sun and wind.

5. Where both causes operate, as is the case in all fervid climates, the effect upon the features and colour of the inhabitants, must be greater in proportion to the influence of the respective causes.

6. The gall or bile of any animal exposed to the sun and air, in a short time becomes black.

7. When from any cause, therefore, the bilious secretion has been increased beyond its natural proportion, and approaches the surface of the body in the progress of circulation, it stains and discolours the complexion.

8. The vapours arising from stagnant waters, with which uncultivated regions abound, great fatigues and hardships, poverty of diet and filthiness in the manner of living, tend likewise to create a surcharge of the bilious secretion. Hence, both from their almost entire nakedness and exposure to the unmitigated effect of the solar and atmospherick influence, savages will always be discoloured, even in a temperate or cold climate, and their hair be black and straight.

9. They who live chiefly on a food, consisting of animal oil, contract a dark complexion, as the Greenlanders, and the inhabitants of Terra del Fuego, whose scanty subsistence consists chiefly of the almost putrid fat of seals.

10. They who make great and sudden changes in their residence from northern to southern climates, are usually attacked by bilious disorders, which leave the blood impoverished, and shed a dark colour over their skin, tinged with a yellowish appearance.

11. Both the climate and complexion of our first parents were an original ground equally favourable, that there would be tribes of their descendants blacks as well as whites.

12. Even the blackest negro, when first born, does not exhibit his entire complexion, till after he has been some time exposed to the contact of the external air.

13. The condition of the most debased blacks in Africa, is evidently the most undesirable, and manifestly of such a nature as exposes them the most effectually to all the influences, which render a complexion of the most gloomy sombre and sullen hue.

REMARKS.

1st. *Christian friends, this subject calls loudly upon us for the exercise of gratitude and thankfulness.*

It is God, who has made us differ from those classes of human beings, that are brought into the world under circumstances far less favourable. His sovereign and gracious hand has placed us amidst a nation highly enlightened, while some of our kindred grope in civil ignorance, and dismal, moral darkness. We may well exclaim in the view both of climate and every endearing privilege, "Our lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage." Contrast our situation with that of some of the nations of the earth, and let us listen to the appeals of our far superiour obligations. With weight then are we addressed, and this subject demands of us a song of nobler praise. What civil and religious liberty do we enjoy, while others of the same blood, groan under the chains of civil and religious bondage ! Then let hymns of praise and songs of joy abound. Let God be exalted in our hearts, to whom alone are praise and glory due. Conscience admonishes all the tribes of mortals of a holy and offended God; but the gospel points out the way to heaven. In time may our theme be gratitude and thankfulness, and in eternity our nobler strains be glory to God in the highest for these unspeakable blessings.

2dly. *We have an appeal to the sympathies of the enlightened and Christian world.*

The ignorance, the servitude and wretchedness of the great mass of human beings, cry mightily for help, to the philanthropist, who is enriched

with all the blessings of heaven upon earth. Their language is, we too are men, we have souls enslaved with sin; but we are perishing, destitute of the means of intellectual improvement, and of all the enlightening beams of the glorious gospel. Pity us, pray for us, exert yourselves in our behalf, and suffer us, though in the most humble manner, to entreat you to divide your substance for our sakes, that our guilty, polluted souls may be saved. Do not despise our low estate, but be ye men indeed, and raise us to the privileges destined for immortal beings. How long, say they, shall we remain degraded, despised, and cast out? Is not the time at hand for us to be restored, to be redeemed, to be rescued from our captivity, and our moral desolations? O where, or to whom shall we look for sympathy? Who of the honoured children of Adam will acknowledge us as brethren, and devise liberal things, that we may have a name in the earth as the sons of God? Who are the happy ones to civilize us, barbarians; to teach us, what are wholesome laws; to establish for our untutored children precious schools, and to make us abound with the means of salvation? We have a tradition of far more desirable days for us outcasts. As for us aged parents, we expect to live and die in the thraldom of sin, and barbarous customs, but for our children, our little ones, our hearts bleed; therefore we sigh in hope, and inquire of the nations, who, for ages, have basked in the blaze of gospel effulgence, if there will not be a time, when the multitudes of captives shall be made free, and when all shall know the Lord, from the least even unto the greatest?

SERMON IV.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HUMAN BEING.

1 KINGS II. 2.

Show thyself a Man.

THESE words contain the charge of a dying father to a surviving son. They were addressed by king David to his son Solomon, who was to succeed him on the throne, and be king over Israel. Solomon was at this time about twenty years of age; an early period for him to enter upon so weighty a charge as the government of God's people. But as he was endued with extraordinary wisdom, David exhorted him to show all Israel, though he was but a child in years, he was a man in capacity and attention to business, and qualified for the station to which he would shortly be raised. "Now the days of David drew nigh, that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all earth; be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments." This is an address truly worthy, from an aged king to a young prince; and claims the consideration of all human beings.

I would remark, that the terms *man* and *human being*, are synonymous expressions, and designate the highest order of being upon the earth. An inquiry is sometimes made, whether man be an animal or spirit. But a direct affirmative answer to either of the interrogatives, would not be correct. No single term will answer the definition, as two

natures, which are essentially different, must be united, to form a correct idea of a human being. The absurdity of denominating man an animal, will appear, when we consider, that the soul is far the most excellent and noble nature. The impropriety of calling him a spirit, may be seen, when we reflect that the idea of a human being, necessarily includes an animal frame.

In illustrating the present subject, I propose to point out some of the characteristicks of a human being.

1st. *A human being is compounded of soul and body, of intellectual and animal nature.*

The soul, as it relates to its natural faculties, is akin to angels. It is made lower than they, both as it refers to its station in the universe, being placed on the earth, the foot-stool of the Deity ; and as it relates to its capacities not being so enlarged. Angels are spirits, so is the soul of man a spirit, though possessing powers and station inferiour to theirs. And though man, as to his corporeal nature, is mortal ; yet his mind is immortal.

As it respects the human body, it is a complete animal frame, and is kin to the animals of the earth. Its very nature is matter, as it is formed of the dust of the earth, and is subject to pain, disease, and death. In this view it has no pre-eminence over the beasts. Its superiority over them arises from its being of a more delicate, beautiful, and noble frame ; from its erect posture, its admirable figure, its countenance most expressive ; but especially from its being a subject of resurrection, and of transformation into a spiritual body. Hence the peculiar propriety of calling man the uniting link in the great scale of being, between the animal kingdom and the world of spirits. Not merely that he partakes of the natures of both, but also because while his superior nature is inferiour to the powers above, his inferior nature is superior to the other animal natures upon the earth.

As the body of man is composed of various members and senses, capable of performing the actions and offices suited to its corporeal nature; so the soul consists of several faculties, which sustain and discharge a variety of offices, correspondent to its intellectual nature. Divines make some variation in the enumeration of the several powers of the human mind. Some class them in the following order: perception, reason, judgement, and will. Others into the following: perception, memory, reason, and conscience.

An inquiry and dispute have long existed respecting the part of the animal frame, in which the soul is seated. Some maintain that it has its chief place in the brain, as that is particularly the seat of sensation. Others think that it is seated in the heart, as that is peculiarly the seat of affection and will. Perhaps it is impossible to ascertain or point out the local situation of the soul in the body. But, its seat of influence, as to the peculiar exertions of its several faculties, may be known by a child. Perception, memory, and reason, have their agency and influence in the head or brain, in a particular manner; as is evident from the various operations they perform, affecting particularly that part of the bodily frame. Conscience has its influence in the breast; as is manifest by the pleasure or pain that is experienced from the discharging of its office, in approving or condemning. The heart is the seat of affection, whether of love or hatred; and of the will, whether of good or evil.

Passing from observations concerning man as a being compounded of soul and body, of an intellectual and animal nature, I proceed to notice,

2dly. *Some of the various and interesting views, in which the human soul may be considered.*

And to man, especially, the subject is a pleasing and interesting theme. That the human soul is a thinking, intelligent substance, we may readily discern, by turning our thoughts to the immediate

transactions of the mind, or towards those varied external operations of man which are evidently the result of intelligence. "Reflections and conclusions, plans and schemes, stamped with intelligence and carried into effect, bespeak a designing, intelligent agent." But the human soul is not only endued with intelligence, it is gifted with power also. It is the mind, which, at its pleasure, causes the muscles to be braced to raise the arm, or to move it in any direction. And how strikingly is the power of the human soul displayed in a time of imminent danger! How suddenly are the body and its members in a posture of defence! How quickly and powerfully exerted!

An inquiry is sometimes made, Whether the minds of mankind be not entirely similar, except that some are more capacious than others. But another inquiry, with greater propriety, might be made. Are not human souls as varied in their native qualities and geniuses, as human bodies are? We behold some minds more moderate and careful than others; some, more hasty and rash; some, more social and engaging; and some, more discerning and profound. And we can discern these varied native dispositions of the human soul, in all the varied constitutional peculiarities of the human body. No one can show that Deity could not bring into being as great varieties of mind as of matter. Reason and observation unite to teach us, that the minds of men are greatly different and varied from one another, both as it respects their native quality and inherent disposition.

The human soul is capable of great activity and enjoyment; and it is also subject to fatigue and pain. At one time, it ascends to the stars in contemplation, and to the heavens in transport; at another it descends to the lowest depths of stupor and distress. In the present state, it is like the body, and all sublunary things, continually varying or changing. An inquiry is naturally suggested,

Why is the human soul said to be immortal ? One reason is, when the body becomes lifeless and inactive, entombed in the silent grave, the soul loses not its sensibility and activity. Brought into existence not to die, but to survive beyond the end of time, and to flourish in immortal bloom.

With this view we may conclude when all the infirmities of disease and tottering old age enfeeble the body, the soul does not decline, nor fail in point of its natural capacity. It is only beclouded for a season from displaying that vigour which it would do, were its decaying frame changed into a healthful and active body. Hence we may discern the vast superiority of the one over the other.

3dly. *Man bears the image of his Creator.*

After the Lord had created the heavens and the earth, and furnished the world with a rich profusion of vegetative and sensitive natures, he was pleased to form man, a noble and intelligent being. The scriptural account is this : " God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image." Then in his original state man was an intelligent and holy being. And though, in consequence of the fall, he is brought into existence destitute of holiness or the moral image of God ; yet, in the very frame and constitution of his intellectual nature, he bears the image of his Maker. His soul is a transcript of the natural perfections of the Deity. God is a spirit infinite in intelligence and activity ; and the soul of man is a finite, intelligent, and active spirit. Known unto God are all things from the beginning of the world.—And man has perception and memory, and is endued with reason, by which he can trace effects to their cause, and demonstrate the Being and perfections of the Author of nature, from the works of creation and providence.

The Lord beholds an essential difference between virtue and vice, holiness and sin, in their very natures. And man is capable of discerning moral

obligation, and the beauty or deformity of moral actions. His reason and conscience enable him to discern and feel, that there is an essential difference between right and wrong; and they teach him, that he ought to love and worship God, and be impartial and benevolent towards his fellow men.

In a word, man is the living image of the ever-living God, in whom is displayed more of the divine nature and glory, than in all the other works and creatures of this lower world. Says the Psalmist, “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.” The crown of Adam was a perfect, royal diadem, and the nobleness of his soul beamed brightly in his countenance. And though his posterity exhibit only fallen greatness and glory; still they appear with dignity, inasmuch as they bear the natural image of their Creator.

4thly. *It is a characteristick of a human being to be lord of this lower world.*

By divine appointment, not only the vegetable kingdom, but the animal world, is subservient to man. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea, are under his control, both for his support and convenience. The Lord said to man, “The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.” According to this divine grant, that reason or intelligence with which man is endued, not only renders him far superiour to the animals of the earth, but it brings them all under his subjection. Although some of the animals are far superiour to man in corporeal strength; yet they learn obedience to him, and are at his disposal. See the horse, that noble animal, daily serving man for his profit and comfort. The generous ox, after performing the labours of the field, yields his flesh

as a rich repast. The harmless sheep is taken for food and clothing.

Hence man's station is elevated far higher than any other upon earth; and his empire is as vast as the world. And this government he has not unlawfully obtained and usurped; for he has a royal grant—a legal charter. The following is the scriptural account: “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea.” The Lord has created principalities and powers in heavenly places; and he was pleased to appoint man with delegated authority over this whole world. And surely he would not have given him such extensive dominion, if he were not endued with capacities, suitable for such an high station. Thus we see, man is raised high in the scale of being, and greatly advanced in honour and glory. How wide is his kingdom! How numerous his subjects! How great his dignity!

5thly. *Man is a being capacitated for great and noble actions.*

His capacity, both bodily and mental, has enabled him to rear astonishing and lasting monuments of his power and skill. The labours of thousands of individuals are handed down in history, as wonders to the world. But lofty pyramids, vast bridges, extensive walls and canals, display a small portion of the genius and ability of man. We must survey every part of the habitable globe, from the beginning to the end of time, would we discover how vast and astonishing are the effects of his wisdom and power. Shall we say mankind have founded the most magnificent cities, erected the most superb edifices, levelled mountains with plains, and turned the course of rivers? Yea, more than this: for wheresoever any traces of the art and power of human beings can be discerned, there may we

contemplate the effects of the intelligence and power of the mind, which render the body its instrument; and bring to its aid all mechanical powers; and which have effected all the wonders of art and labour, that any human being has ever beheld. The civil, literary, and moral world, can furnish innumerable instances of the greatness and nobleness of human conduct, which do honour to human nature. Both sacred and profane history hand down from posterity to posterity, examples of human beings truly magnanimous, worthy of admiration and imitation. Innumerable are their remarkable deeds, and noble exploits.

Let a few of the wonderful things which man has done, be noticed. Adam, we are informed, gave names to all the beasts of the field. But, for such a great and honourable trust, with what singular wisdom must he have been endued; or else, how peculiarly favoured of heaven! Abraham, by his faithfulness, obtained blessings for all the nations of the earth. Surely the Lord must have been well pleased with his works, thus highly to have honoured him. Noah was the instrument of saving the world from extinction. And shall we hesitate to pronounce this a great and glorious work? Joseph, though a youth, preserved two nations from temporal ruin. Who can read his history, and not discern a varied course of conduct truly noble, and eminently dignified? Moses delivered the people of God from the house of bondage, and led them victorious through hosts of enemies to the land of promise. Though the meekest of men, his actions proclaim him truly magnanimous. David settled the kingdom of Israel in peace; and Solomon raised it to the summit of national glory. Their works bespeak their greatness. Paul, in spite of pagan superstition, laws, and learning, established Christianity in the heathen world. His labours and zeal evince the mighty nobleness of his soul.

"Luther and Calvin, by the tongue, and with the

pen of controversy, brought about a great and glorious reformation in the Christian church. Newton, by his discoveries in the material world; and Locke and Edwards, by theirs in the intellectual, have enlarged the boundaries of human knowledge and human happiness. Franklin in the cabinet, and Washington in the field, by their united energies, achieved independence, peace, and prosperity for America. If we had time to survey the land of Shinar, where Babel, Babylon, and Nineveh stood; or the land of Egypt, where so many grand and costly pyramids, tombs, and temples were erected; or the famous cities of Greece and Rome, where the nobler efforts of human power and genius have been still more amply displayed, we might find monuments of human actions truly great and magnanimous." But sufficient has been said to show, that man has capacity for great and noble actions.

6thly. *A human being is of great dignity, as appears from the great attention and regard which God hath paid to man.*

The Lord does indeed take care of all his creatures; and his tender mercies are over all his works; but man has always been the favourite child of providence. Before he was brought into being, a large and beautiful world was provided for his habitation; and ever since the day of his creation, all nature has been governed to contribute to his support and happiness. For his good especially the sun is appointed to rule the day, and the moon to govern the night. The regular return of the seasons, and a rich profusion of all the blessings of life, verify the memorable promise to man after the flood. The Lord has also given his angels charge over him, to keep him in all his ways. Accordingly they have appeared from time to time, to instruct him in duty, to deliver him from danger, to bring him good tidings, to attend his dissolution, and to convey his departing spirit to mansions of everlasting rest. But the most distin-

guishing and astonishing regard and display of the divine attention, benevolence, and mercy, are the incarnation, life and death of the Son of God for the salvation of man. Rebel angels were passed by; but for fallen man, the Lord said, I have found a ransom. And what great things have been done for his redemption, which serve to show his vast importance in the great scale of moral being. Surely a being whom the Lord would thus highly notice and regard, must have a nature noble, and of great dignity.

7thly. *A human being has capacity for endless progression in knowledge, holiness, and happiness.*

A being to exist for ever, and to behold more and more of the works of God. The pre-eminence of the human soul over the spirit of the animal creation, is great, both from the consideration of its native superior excellence, and its immortality. While the one goes downward, or perishes with the body, the other goes upward, for ever expanding in eternity. Arguments both from reason and analogy may be drawn, to show that the future existence of human beings will be far more enlarged and dignified than the present. All the transformations of vegetables and animals in the present state, serve to confirm this idea. And as the human body is to be transformed into a spiritual, glorified body; so will the human soul be proportionally advanced, its faculties enlarged, dignified, and suited to its exalted state. Hence man is capacitated for endless progression in knowledge, in moral excellence, and felicity, which is the perfection of his nature. It is the prerogative and perfection of Deity, to be infinite in knowledge, benevolence, and blessedness. And it is the highest glory of created intelligent beings, to be capable of endless improvements, and to resemble more and more the Author of their being.

Hence man has not only a rational, but an immortal existence. The soul, which is properly the

man, will survive the body, and live for ever. It will survive all the desolations and ravages of time, and exist to be the constant spectator of the successive scenes of eternity. The human soul is infinitely superior, in point of dignity and importance, to all the objects and creatures, whose existence expires with time. And the faculties of perception, memory, and reason, with which man is endued, enable him to proceed from one degree of knowledge to another, in a constant and endless progression. Moreover, a chain, or connexion, runs through all the branches of human knowledge; so that the attainment of one degree or branch of knowledge facilitates the acquisition of another; and the more a man knows, the more is he capable of knowing. Hence, as all the powers and faculties of the mind brighten and expand by proper exercise; so a man's capacity for improvement is enlarged, as the means and thirst for edification increase. Reason and conscience chiefly constitute man a moral agent, and render him capable of every holy and virtuous affection. And as he is capable of growing in knowledge both intellectual and moral, so is he capable of growing in holiness in a constant series, and for an endless duration.

Man has also a capacity for enjoyment, equal to his capacity for knowledge and holiness; and these are the origin or grand pillars, which support all true and substantial happiness. Knowledge and holiness in the Deity, are the source of all his happiness and blessedness; and angels rise in bliss in proportion as they advance in knowledge and holiness. Saints on earth, increase in happiness as they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of holy and divine objects. And if we follow man to glory, where his views, his affections, and his joys are incessantly enlarging; we may form some faint conceptions of the amazing heights, to which man is capable of rising in endless and divine enjoy-

ments. What a dignity does this give to man; and how near does it place him to principalities and powers above!

INFERENCES.

1st. *A most pleasing and sublime idea is necessarily included in the contemplation of a human being.*

What a pre-eminence has man over all the creatures of the earth! How elevated his station, and how abundant his means of improvement and enjoyment! And how solemn the thought that a human being is born to die, and born for immortality! That while the animal frame is mouldering to dust with its native earth, the soul is with kindred spirits in a world unknown. And what vast scenes will yet be presented to every one of the human race! Though the eye may never be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing, in the present state, yet every soul will be satisfied with the vast scenes of the conflagration of the world, the general resurrection, and the final judgment day. Must every human being be a companion of holy angels or of the spirits of darkness for ever? Such a reflection should fill our minds with solemnity. The scenery of this life is truly wondrous and majestic, but boundless scenes await us. Hence the very idea of a human being, is a thought of inconceivably vast importance. "Eternity! thou pleasing, dreadful thought!"

2dly. *We see the vast importance of cultivating and improving our minds in all the useful branches of human knowledge.*

Next to religion, extensive knowledge in the various arts and sciences, is the brightest ornament of human nature. Such an acquisition enlarges, strengthens, and polishes the human soul, and sets its beauty and dignity in a clear light. Learning has made astonishing distinctions among the different tribes of the earth. Those nations, who

have enjoyed the enlightening beams of science, have appeared like a superior order of beings, in comparison with those, who have dragged out their lives under the dark and gloomy shades of ignorance. All our natural powers are so many talents, which, in their nature, lay us under moral obligations to improve them to the best advantage. We were made to live an active life; to be the servants of God, and beneficial to each other. Knowledge and learning are of great utility in every station of life; therefore we cannot reach the summit of usefulness, and attain the great end of our being, without cultivating our mental powers according to our opportunities and ability, that we may be the more extensively useful in both the civil and moral world. Moreover, the arts and sciences, when properly cultivated, tend to promote genuine religion; therefore they are called its handmaid. They serve to enlarge and exalt our views in relation to the works and perfections of God; and they do clearly define and make known our varied relations and obligations towards him, and towards our fellow men. Hence the importance of their cultivation for the improvement of our minds and for more extensive usefulness.

3dly. *This subject may assist us, in ascertaining the proper boundaries of human attainments in knowledge.*

"Our rational powers, it is often said, are limited; and therefore, all our intellectual pursuits and improvements must be limited. This is doubtless true. But, unless men attempt to pry into things, which surpass created powers and faculties, I do not know, that they transgress the boundaries of human attainments. All that divines or philosophers have to determine, is, whether the proposed subjects require more than created abilities to investigate them; for the human soul will be eternally increasing in knowledge. If the subject require more than created abilities, it is in vain to

proceed : if they do not, we have the same grounds to proceed that men ever had to attempt any new discoveries."

4thly. *We may see from this subject, that the responsibility of human beings must be great.*

As their station in the great scale of being is elevated, so they have opportunity of doing much good, by wisely improving the talents intrusted to their charge. They who have knowledge, wealth, influence, or any other talents, should improve them as wise and faithful stewards of their Lord and Master. In what station soever man is placed, he should have a supreme regard to the glory of God, and the highest good of the community. Opportunities of education and religious instruction, natural and acquired abilities, the calls of providence and conscience ; all social, civil, and religious means and privileges, will be brought to view at the great day of retribution. Even though some have far more extensive opportunities and privileges than others, who can say that only one talent is committed to his charge ? But whether we spend our probationary state in the ways of wisdom or folly, our responsibility will at last appear to be momentously great.

Delightful indeed the contemplation of a human being in all his relations and dignity, if he walk in wisdom's ways ; but dreadful reflection, to live and die an apostate from God, and from all the glories of his moral kingdom. Then may our souls and bodies be dedicated to Him, and all our talents consecrated to his glorious service, both now and for ever more.

SERMON V.

MAN URGED TO ACT WORTHILY OF HIS DIGNIFIED NATURE.

1 KINGS II. 2.

Show thyself a Man.

HAVING in the preceding discourse pointed out some of the characteristicks of a human being, the way is prepared to show how human beings should conduct, would they show themselves men, or act as becometh rational, accountable, and immortal beings.

The first thing they have to do, is to cease to do evil, and learn to do well.

There are none who have not gone astray ; for the word of God asserts, the whole world lieth in wickedness. How then does it become man to refrain from every ignoble act which degrades his nature, and to cultivate all manly and noble virtues which are consonant to his important station. "Let him that has stolen, steal no more." Let those who imprudently have wounded the feelings of a friend, or injured their neighbour or themselves by their evil ways, be watchful for the future. Whether mankind have transgressed in a greater or less degree, the voice of wisdom calls to immediate reformation. Aged sinners and bold transgressors may well forbear ; and surely, since youth are rational, accountable, and immortal beings, they should readily turn from that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good.

The subject has been considered in its fairest view, or on the bright side of the question. Hence,

the picture which is now to be drawn, is of a dark and gloomy nature. It is not my design, however, to bring to view the awfully abominable, outbreaking crimes, and horribly ravaging moral desolations, which have suddenly swept away individuals and overwhelmed nations. It will be sufficient to notice some of the sins of man, which are not so notoriously sad and ruinous in their immediate external consequences.

But what melancholy truths would be delineated, if we had only a faint picture presented of the impiety and ungodliness with which the earth is filled! Not only heathen lands, but also those that are called Christian, attest that man has shamefully degraded himself by his extreme aversion to the worship of the only living and true God. Do our souls shudder at the thought of human crimes and woes, which have overwhelmed the world, by reason of fallen man seeking to injure and destroy his fellow men? Sad reflection indeed! But has not Heaven been insulted? Has it no complaint against the sons of men? Hear, and let our souls be astonished. They are charged with the direful sins of robbing God, of changing the truth of God into a lie, and of worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator. The crown, the glory, or the excellence of any intelligent being, is truly departed, when he refuses to render to his Maker that homage which is his due. This is the great degradation and abasement of the noble creature man, in his apostate condition.

2dly. *Would mankind show themselves men, they should be honest in their dealings with one another.*

It is a common proverb that honesty is the best policy. This may be a good reason for uprightness in secular transactions; but a still better can be given. It is morally fit and equitable to regard the welfare of others as our own. Whatever reasons we can advance in behalf of our own pros-

perity as it respects the comforts of this life, the same can be alleged in behalf of others. They have wants in general with our own selves ; and have as delicate sensibility of pain and injury, when wronged or defrauded. Peace of conscience, individual happiness, and the publick good, demand all men, not only to look to their own welfare, but also to that of others. In all the common contracts and pursuits of mankind towards each other, would they consult mutual benefit, how many evils would be banished from the world. How much labour would be saved—how many law-suits and sharp contentions prevented, and the interest of all classes promoted ! Peace, prosperity, and moral fitness, call for uprightness between man and man in their daily intercourse. And since they are rational and accountable beings, they should ever be mindful of the golden rule, “ As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them ; for this is the law and the prophets.”

3dly. *Temperance becometh rational and accountable beings.*

It is not my design in this place to bring to view the loathsome spectacle of persons in the most degrading state of intoxication ; nor to draw a picture of wretchedness in consequence of fortune squandered, and families reduced to extreme poverty. It is sufficient to hint at the woes, with which the earth is filled in ten thousand ways, in consequence of the abounding sin of intemperance. It is granted, the Lord designs that man should eat, and drink, and enjoy the good of his labour. Still, to abuse the divine bounty by daily excessive eating or drinking, is not only a sin against God, but destructive to happiness and ruinous to the soul. Intemperance, though not carried to the greatest excess, is a barrier to the most refined feelings of literary and social life, and a shield to prevent divine truth from having its proper force on the mind. The truly temperate have superiour

advantages of present comfort and usefulness. Duty, present enjoyment, and prospects of futurity, call upon man as a rational and accountable being to live temperately.

The horse and mule, and other animals, which indulge themselves in sensual gratifications, are incapable of extending their views by moral and intellectual improvements. But it is beneath the dignity of man, who has an immortal spirit, to be lavish in the pleasures of sense; for he thus weakens the noble powers of his soul, and retards his progress in moral and rational attainments. Still, many of the human race place themselves on a level with the beasts, and some sink themselves beneath them. How have many by their intemperance and rashness rendered themselves unfit for the duties of religion, or mental improvement, and incapable of the common actions of life. They have greatly blunted the power of perception, weakened memory and reason, and deceived and seared their conscience. How affecting the sight to behold a man of strong mental powers reduced to a mere idiot by his excesses in animal indulgences!

4thly. *They who would show themselves men, will be careful to avoid evil speaking.*

As speech is one of the great means of communicating ideas from man to man, so various are the arguments, and powerful the motives, which might be offered to dissuade from defamation. It should be avoided; for it is a great perversion and abuse of the tongue. This little, but important member, was designed for social and interesting conversation, to promote the dearest interests of society, and to proclaim the praises of the Author of nature. But how lamentable the perversion, when it is drawn forth to slander, instead of giving counsel to the ignorant and wandering, of encouraging the timid, of consoling the afflicted, and promoting the peace and happiness of individuals and the

community! Shall it be said that words are a cheap gift? And shall not they be granted, when they can promote human felicity in ten thousand ways? Or shall evil speaking be indulged, and shoot forth instruments of cruelty, like fire-brands, arrows, and death?

Man should refrain from the practice, as it manifests a base spirit, and is the dialect of the region below. When any one is active in exaggerating the faults or failings of others, and of spreading them abroad, a low mind is characterized. A man of noble sentiments, would rather commend than defame his neighbour. His liberal soul would shrink at the thought of such a painful and degrading task.

Persons addicted to evil speaking, are generally paid by retaliation. They who are censorious and bitter towards others, have the same measure meted out to them again, and frequently pressed down and running over. If the person injured should not retaliate, yet others see the failings, and will publish the faults of those who render their tongues instruments of injury to their fellow men. Then, from motives of policy, a prudent man would guard his tongue against slander, lest he be repaid in the same base coin.

Evil speakers destroy their own peace and comfort. They frequently reproach, in the heat of passion; but in time of cool reflection, how are they frequently pained with keen self-mortification. When they behold the person whose interest they should have viewed with tenderness, but whose character they have sought to injure, how will shame and conscious guilt fill their breast, bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder! Thus inward peace is destroyed, which is of more value than rubies. They who are ready to seize every opportunity to speak evil of others, will find no time for their troubled souls to rest. They may discover so many faults or failings among man-

kind, that before they shall have thoroughly circulated one slanderous report, they will be hurried on with another.

Man should be constantly careful to guard his tongue, from the consideration that the pernicious effects of evil speaking on individuals and the community, can never be remedied. They who publickly injure others by slander, put it beyond their power to prevent the injury from spreading, even if they should truly repent of their evil conduct. Like the main-spring of a watch, or like the principal wheel in some complicated machinery, which moves various other wheels, so one tongue frequently excites to motion ten thousand other tongues. And what is the ability of a slanderer, even though penitent, to prevent the evils which he has done from spreading wide, like a raging pestilence? How pleasing, how benignant, how extensive are the goodly effects of speech, when properly directed! But how sad, how melancholy, how pernicious its devastations, when perverted!

5thly. *Would men conduct as becometh rational and accountable beings, they will not take the name of the Lord in vain.*

Profanity is a sin highly provoking to God, and offensive to every serious or refined mind. No person, who continues in a course of profane swearing, has any ground to expect the forgiveness of his transgression. Hear the injunction : "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain."

It would be painful to hear the name of a worthy friend used on every trifling occasion, in a foolish and disgusting manner. But how guilty, how hardened must he be, who, with the greatest levity will trifle with the sacred names of the supreme Being! Rather let horrour seize the soul, and confusion cover the face of a human being, than that his lips should belch forth cursing and blasphemy.

Perhaps we may expect to hear the drunkard and abandoned profligate bid defiance to heaven, and profane the name of God; but shall persons of refined manners, shall parents, shall magistrates, be guilty of profane swearing? Then shall the land mourn, and the prospects of the rising generation be darkened. How foolish and wicked, how unbecoming and degrading to a rational, accountable being, is the taking of the name of the Lord in vain! At the very mention of his dread, sacred name, the seraph's golden harp is silent; and Satan, who at times is proud of his throne, then stands appalled. And now shall man, a worm of the dust, shall vile man dare blaspheme the God of heaven?

6thly. *They who would show themselves men, will be forbearing towards one another.*

Who is there that does not need the forbearance of his fellow men? Where is the man, who has never transgressed, nor never injured any of his fellow mortals? Unless one can be presented, who is perfectly free from censure in all his ways, the duty is naturally and universally binding. But how does the world abound with offences from faults and failings, and how suitable the exhortation, "Be ye kind, forbearing one another in love." Without mutual forbearance, the sweets of social life would be greatly embittered, and society dissolved. How compassionate, forbearing, and long-suffering is the Lord towards a sinful world! Well, then, may frail, mortal man, both from interest and duty, be forbearing towards his fellow mortal.

7thly. *Human beings should not consider it beneath their dignity to reverence and worship their Creator.*

Shall beings, bound to the judgement bar of God, cast off fear, and restrain prayer before him? Shall holy angels fall prostrate and worship day and night in his presence? And shall mankind exclaim, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him;

and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" Be astonished, O heavens! and tremble, O earth! Not only revelation, but the light of reason, and conscience, call upon all human beings to show themselves men, by reverencing and worshipping their Creator and final Judge.

To every man not lost to all sense of intellectual and moral worth, the gospel must be highly precious. "Since all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." But, because salvation cannot flow to mankind as to holy beings who never fell, shall they not rejoice in the way of salvation by grace, and in the title of redeemed sinners! Rebels may well be ashamed of their crimes, which degrade their natures; but how unbecoming for criminals to spurn at the idea of repentance and pardon. The doctrines and duties of the Gospel, are most reasonable; and how honourable must they be, to make children of wrath heirs of heaven. The crown is fallen from the head of man by reason of sin; and it is only through the gospel, that he can be crowned with glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. The glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, is worthy of rich and poor, bond and free, noble and ignoble. But shall we despise that, which is worthy of all acceptance? "Ashamed of Jesus! yes, I may, when I have no sins to wash away." Man's highest interest for time and eternity, the honour and glory of God, forbid that human beings should be ashamed to embrace and profess the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

INFERENCES.

1st. *How unwise for men not to conduct as becometh rational and accountable beings.*

A contrary course is attended with vanity and vexation of spirit. Departures from the path of rectitude and rationality are followed with disap-

pointment, pain, and remorse. Human beings, who have reason, conscience, and the word of God, for their direction in the path of duty and of eternal life, must have a painful task, to bid them defiance and act irrationally. Surely it is a folly for any one to continue in sin, merely because he has transgressed. And if any feel the weight of aggravated guilt, why should they continue to increase their hardness, and still add to their treasure of wrath ?

Religion is the ornament and perfection of human nature ; and the man of true religion is the man of immortal honour. Pain, poverty, sickness, and death, may indeed veil, but they cannot destroy his moral dignity, which sometimes shines with more resplendent glory under all the clouds and storms of life. When the mind is animated with religious and holy affections, then a man appears truly noble, whether he be in distress, or even in the agonies of death. It is genuine religion, or heavenly wisdom, which spreads the greatest glory around any human character. It was this gracious and heavenly adorning, this glorious crown of precious jewels, that exalted Abraham, Solomon, and Paul, above the wise men of the pagan world.

2dly. *This subject should excite alarm in the breasts of impenitent sinners.*

All men are fallen beings, guilty in the sight of God ; and the impenitent refuse to apply to the blood of Christ, which alone can cleanse from sin. They choose the road which is moral darkness and death ; and reject the proffered salvation of the gospel, in which alone life and immortality are brought to light. Perhaps they are much delighted in sensitive gratifications, much engaged in the affairs of this world, or much interested for mental improvement, wherefore they strive to keep the solemn and awful realities of eternity from their minds. But, in the invisible and eternal world, their utmost endeavours will be in vain as to the secluding such

melancholy reflections. They will have constant and increasing displays of the divine holiness and justice eternally rising to their view. They must be for ever increasing in the knowledge of these attributes; and how dreadful the thought, that as their knowledge increases, so will their wickedness and misery increase. Who can endure the thought of lying down in sorrow and keen despair, and before him view sorrows eternally rising and increasing. In eternity the Lord will display the greatness, the majesty, and holiness of his character, to all finite intelligent beings; and such displays will kindle the flames of hell in the souls of the damned. How dreadful to the impenitent reader or hearer must be these reflections!

3dly. *What encouraging and goodly prospects to all those who are walking as becometh rational and accountable beings.*

So far as any thus walk, so far they pursue the path of true happiness. They are pursuing their present peace and comfort, and future even everlasting blessedness. They have no reason to be weary in well doing, for shortly they will hear their Saviour's glorious plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." What a glorious recompence of reward! "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of the joys which God hath prepared for those that love him." They will not only be for ever free from pain, and complete in bliss; but they will be for ever making nearer approaches to the fountain and source of moral excellence and blessedness. After millions of ages shall have rolled away, their knowledge and joys will rise higher and higher. Motives and prospects of infinite weight to induce mankind to conduct as becometh rational, accountable, and immortal beings.

SERMON VI.

ENVY, ONE OF THE BASEST PASSIONS OF THE HUMAN BREAST.

ESTHER V. 13.

Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate.

CHRISTIAN friends, what is the great end of divine revelation? The apostle Paul, in his epistle to Timothy, responds, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Hence we have this confession of Haman recorded as a reproof and warning to all mankind. The history concerning him and Mordecai is fraught with instruction, to show how sudden and how great may be the changes either of human exaltation, or human abasement. The one, through envy, experienced a most degrading fall; the other, in consequence of his uprightness, was raised to very distinguished honours. Haman told his friends of the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. He said, moreover, "Yea, Esther, the queen, did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared, but myself; and to-morrow, I am invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." What then? The

envious man resolves not only on the destruction of Mordecai, but also on the entire extinction of the Jews, his kindred.

My object in this discourse is to show that envy is one of the basest passions of the human breast, and dreadful in its effects.

But what is envy? Envy is that affection of the human heart, which grudges to others that respect or prosperity, which is supposed to attend them. Or, envy is a sensation of uneasiness and disquiet, excited by a selfish heart, in view of the advantages of others, and accompanied with malignity towards them. Rachel envied her sister Leah, because of her fruitfulness. Joseph's brethren envied him, because his father loved him. Saul envied David, because he considered him as a competitor for the crown. Haman envied Mordecai any honour, because he hated him. And the Jews envied Paul and Barnabas, because they preached the gospel.

The more common objective excitements of envy are accomplishments of mind and person; advantages of birth, rank, and fortune; and superior success in worldly pursuits. Distinguished superiority in genius, learning, eloquence, or eminence in any of those arts or sciences, which attract the notice of the world, often becomes the painful occasion of inflating this spirit in the bosoms of those who have a similar object of pursuit. Persons of inferior station are prone to scrutinize those above them in point of privileges, with an evil eye, as engrossing to themselves all the comforts of life. But the order of society requires a distinction of ranks to exist; hence men are formed for mutual assistance, and with a diversity of talents for usefulness. Thus when envy forms the ruling passion of man, he exhibits a character universally odious. Whether rich or poor, prosperous or adverse, they who are stung with this adder, and suffer its poison to infuse itself

into their vitals, manifest a sense of their inferiority, and unwillingly become the adulators of another man's success, or pay homage to that merit, from which they endeavour to detract. If the false colours were stript from the objects of our envy, what slender grounds would appear for the exercise of this troublesome and dangerous passion.

But the nature and effects of envy will be the more clearly pointed out, by showing from various considerations, that mankind should not harbour this monster in their breast.

1st. *Envious feelings are unreasonable.*

As it respects moral motives and actions, it is the province of reason to point out the advantages or disadvantages of any course of moral conduct. But what are the benefits arising from envy, either to individuals or the community? Surely neither envy nor its operations were any real gain to Haman or his friends. The same melancholy truth may be said concerning every individual, who has been guided by envious feelings. The brethren of Joseph, Saul, and Haman, had sad experience to convince them, that envious feelings and envious treatment of others, were most unreasonable. And at the present day, they who cherish a spirit of envy towards others, whether towards those whom they hate, or towards their enemies, will, to their own cost, reap the reward of unreasonable doings. To envious men the advantages of others prove their disadvantage. Why was not Haman contented? and why did he not richly enjoy the favours conferred upon him? The reason he assigns in the words of the text.

The *first risings* of envy should be resisted; for it dries up all the comforts of the envious man. How did the brethren of Joseph mar their own enjoyments by their envy towards him! This spirit excited such hatred in their breasts, that they could not speak peaceably with him. Envy laid waste the comforts of Saul, although he was clothed with

royalty. And hear Haman, though in the midst of prosperity and grandeur, exclaim, " Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate." The neglect of an individual more than counterbalanced all his affluence, and put an end to his enjoyment. Though a nation trembled before him, and did him reverence; yet, because this Jew refused to bow unto him, envy fired his soul with impatience and malice. What a trifling incident this, so completely to destroy a man's peace ! And how in ten thousand ways are envious men liable to be discomposed by the most frivolous circumstances ! How small a matter can spoil all the satisfaction of the envious, even if they have reached the summit of human greatness ! Immense riches, glory, and honour, gave not Haman so much pleasure as he felt pain from one man's disrespect. How soon are all the comforts of an envious man blasted !

2dly. *The spirit of envy reigns in abject and selfish minds.*

A person of a generous and noble disposition, will rejoice at the prosperity and felicity of others; but an ignoble and envious soul is grieved and chagrined in view of their success and happiness. While a liberal man exercises sympathy with his fellow men in time of their distress, an envious and base man is delighted with their calamities. Nor is envy confined to persons of low circumstances in life ; but boasts of the rich and great as her votaries. The prosperity and elevation of Haman did not secure him from exercising envious feelings of the most degrading nature. How did his soul glow with the livid flame, in view of the peace of one whom he scorned to notice. But the more elevated his station, the more selfish and contracted must be his mind, to be filled with envy towards one whom he considered so much his inferior. Those who possess the spirit of Haman, have a most selfish spirit. Persons of benevolent

feelings would be glad in view of what made him sorry. The enlarged soul is pleased with the prosperity of superiors, inferiors, or equals. But how abject and malignant must be the mind to be grieved and sad in view of those things that ought to yield enjoyment.

3dly. *Envy is not merely against our fellow men, but it is against the providence of God.*

The Lord has not only the keys of life and of death in his hand ; but he giveth the kingdom to whomsoever he will. It was divine providence that rendered Joseph so beloved by his father, and raised him to be governour over all Egypt. Therefore his brethren, in envying him, murmured against God. It was an invisible hand that raised David to the throne, and which caused favour to be shown to Mordecai. And Saul and Haman had hearts irreconciled to the Supreme disposer of events. When any feel envy rising in their breasts in view of the natural talents, rank or affluence of others, let them reflect, that the Lord exalteth, and he casteth down. It is the providence of God, that distributeth favours to the righteous and to the wicked. Then whether competitors, superiors, or inferiors, or enemies, be envied, let the inquiry be made, who hath crowned their labours or enterprises with success ? To be envious towards others in view of their advantages or advancement, is to be unwilling that the Lord should reign, and dispose of the works of his hands as seemeth good in his sight. Why then should we ever be malignant towards our fellow men ; or be uneasy, and fret against the providence of God ?

4thly. *An envious man is detested by all.*

Mankind abhor the one who cherishes a passion so base in his breast. Envy is so evidently repugnant to all religious or social enjoyments, that an envious man is avoided, disesteemed, and detested. But how is the spirit of envy to be discovered ? By the conversation and conduct of a man. How

easily is the spirit of Haman to be discerned ? Would any be esteemed, let them show their good will towards their fellow men ; for an envious man is to be shunned, and will be abhorred by his fellow men.

Let not a malignity so entirely unnatural appear in our lives; let it not flow in all our veins, concealed by our outward garments; but let us beware, in its first gradations, to watch and pray for deliverance from its approaching, internal dominion. In view of the slightest shade, or the least tincture of this hideous evil, let us take warning, lest insensibly we become objects of abhorrence by our fellow men.

5thly. *Envy leads men to all manner of external crimes.*

What but envy enkindled the breasts of Joseph's brethren with the design of taking away his life ? And how easily did this spirit persuade them to sell him to be a slave in Egypt ! How did envy inflame Saul to seek the life of David, his benefactor, and to whom he was more than once indebted for the preservation of his own life. Haman, not content with seeking the life of Mordecai, determined on the destruction of the whole Jewish nation. Says Solomon in his Proverbs, "Wrath is cruel, and anger outrageous ; but who is able to stand before envy ?" It makes men turn into every debasing, unnatural shape, to injure others. The wisest and most upright persons cannot escape its direful effects. In the Ecclesiastes, Solomon says, "I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour." An envious man would gladly wound the feelings of others ; would blast their reputation, and prostrate with the dust all their goodly prospects. No excellence of character, no amiable qualities, are a shield to ward off envious weapons, and secure from harm ; for envy will lead mankind to all manner of external acts of wickedness.

6thly. *Envy draws down retaliation and vengeance on its own head.*

Let us attend to the confession of the brethren of Joseph. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying : spake not I unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child ; and ye would not hear ? therefore, behold also, his blood is required." When their souls were overwhelmed with distress, how readily do they impute their sufferings to be in consequence of their unnatural and envious deed towards their brother. Divine vengeance pursued Cain for slaying his brother Abel, in a very signal manner. It was for envy that he slew him. But God set a mark upon Cain ; and he was a vagabond upon the earth. And for his envious and murderous act, hear him exclaim in agony of soul, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." In these instances, the divine hand is particularly to be noticed as an avenger of envy. But in others, the hand of man more evidently renders vengeance ; and frequently the very designs which envious people form to promote their own honour and to injure others, draw down shame and ruin on their own heads.

This was strikingly exemplified in the affair of Haman and Mordecai. Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself ? Therefore, to the king's interrogation in relation to this subject he answered, "For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal, which is set upon his head ; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom

the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the streets of the city, and proclaim before him, ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.’ Then the king said to Haman, ‘Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai, the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.’ Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.”

How great must have been the mortification of Haman to have all that honour which he had pictured for himself, conferred upon Mordecai, whom he envied and detested! How must he have felt himself degraded to be his lackey and herald, in proclaiming before him through the street, that the king was delighted thus to honour him. And now let us turn our thoughts to the gallows of seventy-five feet in height, which Haman had caused to be reared for Mordecai, and contemplate his sad disappointment. “ Harbonah said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.” Then let not the monster envy have a residence in our hearts, lest it draw down vengeance on our own heads.

7thly. *Envy prevents the blessings of heaven, and torments the soul where it dwells, like death.*

The spirit of grace, and an envious spirit, cannot possibly reside in the same heart. A malignant disposition more effectually secludes any gracious affections of the soul, than locks and bars can secure a castle. Light and darkness have not a greater contrast than the nature of the spirit of envy, and of

that spirit which alone prepares for heaven. Envy, like a vulture preying upon the vitals, is sickness and death to the soul. Says Job, "Wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one." By this expression we are taught that the inward torments of the envious are death to the soul, as the taking away of animal life is the death of the body. Solomon says, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy, the rottenness of the bones." This expression shows that the mental wounds of envy are deep and destructive.

8thly. *We should not harbour the direful monster envy in our breasts, lest it for ever reign in us to a dreadful degree, in hell.*

The spirit of envy is the very temper of the region below. In the abodes of wo, where all restraints are removed, this deadly monster rages to an awful degree. But in the land of hope let all the social virtues be cultivated; and let not man endeavour to resemble as nearly as possible the fiends of darkness, by yielding his heart an abode for envy. The region of wo is filled with envious spirits; for it has not a solitary inhabitant but what is under its dominion. Then let not mankind yield themselves its servants; and cultivate the temper of the infernal regions.

Surely an envious man must be in the road to death; and by cherishing an envious spirit, he is fast preparing as a brand for the burning. While some men are evidently preparing for heaven, so an envious man is emphatically preparing for hell. Envy is one of the most fiery ingredients of torment in the region of despair; for it is exercised in the view of the most consummate felicity of all the inhabitants of heaven. All who cherish it are preparing to be for ever filled with it, against the blessed God and all his saints and holy angels.

Envy, in the present state, is under many and powerful restraints, which check or alleviate its gnawings, but in the region of despair it will burn

with resistless and unquenchable flames. And who can endure the thought of being their own tormentors for eternity ? Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can lie down in everlasting burnings?

INFERENCES.

1st. *The proverb is true, "Let envy alone, and it will punish itself."*

It is so disquieting, restless, and tormenting, in its very nature, that it needs no opposition to render the envious person wretched. It is self-tormenting, and in its very existence is inseparably connected with unhappiness. The envious man is not only punished in consequence of his evil doings, but he punishes himself. Envy, not only as it respects the future, but also for the present, biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. All the arguments of this discourse, which have been offered to show that it is one of the basest passions of the human breast, and dreadful in its effects, serve to show that envious persons are their own tormentors.

2dly. *How reasonable and glorious are the doctrines and requisitions of the gospel.*

They are all according to moral fitness; calculated to promote the peace and joy of individuals, and the highest good of the community. How safe and excellent the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!" And how benevolent the injunction, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." As far as the requisitions of the gospel have their due influence on the minds of men, so far they enjoy a heaven below. As a selfish, envious spirit, experiences in some degree the pains of souls in wo, so a benevolent mind has some foretastes of the joys of heaven. How reasonable and glorious, then, the doctrines and duties of the gospel!

3dly. *How necessary for the true happiness of fallen man, that he be born again; as sinful pas-*

sions must not only be restrained, but subdued by grace.

Mankind may do much for their own comfort, by checking and restraining unruly passions; but their reason is unable effectually to subdue them. Instead of cherishing anger, hatred, envy, malice, and revenge, they may cultivate all the amiable, social virtues. But these will not answer as a substitute for gracious affections. It is the spirit of God alone, which can eradicate the seeds of wickedness from the heart, and implant those graces which are essentially different in their nature. Grace can subdue the passions, can give new vigour to our social feelings, and implant that love which is the fulfilling of the law.

May we ever remember how unworthy we are in the sight of God, and how much the blessings which each of us enjoy, are beyond what we deserve. Let our fervent supplications be to have our hearts purified by the operations of the Holy Spirit, that they be delivered from a passion so base and criminal as envy, and renewed in the holy and benevolent image of our God.

Reader, or hearer, has envy never flashed for a moment in your bosom? Have you never seen enough of your own wickedness, of the awful plague of your own heart, to make you cry out, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Fourthly. *How great must be the pains of hell, even from the direful ingredients of a wicked heart.*

When all the evil passions of the human breast are no more confined by restraints, but burst forth in all their ungovernable rage, as in the region of despair, how wretched must they render the sufferer! How will they prove a gnawing worm, an unquenchable fire, to the soul! How painful and distressing are the stings of envy, malice, and revenge, in the present state, even though but for a moment, and held back by restraints! But how

intolerable must it be to endure the unrestrained rage and torment of all the sinful passions of a wicked heart, in that place where hope never cometh ! Even in this life, the malignant exercises of only one of the human passions against an individual, is sufficient to destroy the comfort of any man, and render his moments wretched. Yet, this is only a small portion of torment, a mere spark of those unquenchable flames which are enkindled from all the direful affections and passions of the finally impenitent, against all holy beings.

5thly. *Great must be the joys of the righteous in the future world, even from a benevolent heart.*

Benevolent exercises in the present state, fill the soul with peace and joy. But these are faint prelibations of that future peace which passeth understanding, and of those joys which are at the right hand of God. The highest joys of mortals on earth, when compared to those above, are as the dim taper of a candle to the brightness of noon. Does a benevolent heart rejoice in the prosperity and felicity of its fellow mortals in this pilgrimage state ? Then how will a sight of those joys of the blessed in glory, enkindle that heart into raptures of joy and transports of bliss ! All the gracious and benevolent exercises of the soul, in its tabernacle of clay, are only in the bud, and frequently nipped by chilling frosts. But in a glorified spirit, in a spiritual body, how will they flourish and bloom in endless day ! Souls in glory are not only encircled in the arms of everlasting love, but they have within them a well of water, springing up unto eternal life, to produce constant joys, and render fully complete their blessedness.

SERMON VII.

LITTLE THINGS BLIGHT THE FAIREST PROSPECTS OF MAN.

SOLOMON'S SONG II. 15.

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines ; for our vines have tender grapes.

HIGHLY figurative is the book from which these words are taken. It contains peculiar beauties, and invites the delicate and refined mind to a close search for their discovery and excellence. As Christ and the church are the general subject of discourse, so the prospects and glory of both may be considered as one. Whatever is for the honour or dishonour of the church, has a direct bearing on the person, character, and offices of Christ. And although believers are primarily intended in the wonderful theme of Solomon's Song, yet, the instruction should be improved by all mankind.

The words of the text will admit of a varied and highly interesting explanation. The fox is an animal noted both for his cunning, and mischievous tricks. Foxes used to injure the vines by pulling and trampling on them, and they destroyed the grapes of the vintage. And little foxes would spoil the vines which were loaded with luxuriant clusters. Hence, not only the old crafty fox, but the little foxes also, must be taken and secured, lest they destroy the labours of man. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines ; for our vines have tender grapes."

This figurative expression teaches, That little things do sometimes blight the fairest prospects of human happiness. The subject will apply to mental, social, civil, and evangelical duties and prospects.

1st. Intellectual and moral culture.

The mind may be considered as a vine, capable of bringing forth tender grapes; but if the little foxes be suffered to sport unmolested, and to run at large, they will spoil the vine, and destroy the tender and precious fruit. If, instead of cherishing and cultivating virtuous principles and social affections, we suffer evil passions to predominate but in a small degree, how is inward peace destroyed! Then, in vain may we look for fruit, ripe and delicious, while nettles and thorns overspread the ground. Our minds, by proper culture, will yield the fruits of peace, encouragement, and animation; but if they be neglected, there will spring up the sad crops of uneasiness, discouragement, and dejection. It is for the want of a little consideration, that a fretful and restless disposition takes the place of a peaceable and quiet mind. But if we guard the vine, shooting buds, and pleasant flowers, and fruit, which is sweet to the taste, will be produced in rich abundance. The pains or labour bestowed in taking the little foxes, and preventing their pernicious tricks, will be amply repaid by a glorious harvest. Then let anger and jealousy, hatred and envy, malice and revenge, be checked in their first risings, before they be fanned into a flame, intolerable to the soul.

The happiness of every person depends very much on the proper government of himself, and the forming of such habits of reflection and conversation, as tend to alleviate the common distresses of life. Some dispositions are naturally more generous, humane, and contented, than others; but those which are most unfavourable, by seasonable attention and proper management, may be rendered very agreeable. To this end it is important to consider our acquaintances in a favourable point of view, and to reflect much on the varied blessings daily conferred upon us. And while we would guard against grossly sinful, and pernicious thoughts, let our me-

ditations be such as an enlightened conscience and a righteous God will approve. May we keep our hearts with all diligence, that our minds may be flourishing vines, producing the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

2dly. Social duties.

Society may be considered as a wide spreading vine, whose rich clusters are liable to be destroyed by little foxes, unless they be taken and secured. So varied are the natural dispositions, and the pursuits of mankind, that mutual forbearance is essential to the peace and prosperity of the community. Offences do not only arise from flagrant acts of injustice, but trivial faults do often occasion serious difficulties. Sometimes a trifling misunderstanding is the means of wide spread and lasting evils. Little things do now and then cause divisions among young people, and draw forth foolish and hard sayings. Small failings are suffered to interrupt their union, to break their peace, and mar all their enjoyments. Perhaps some one has made a mischievous observation; and others, for want of wisdom, give it aggravated colourings, and let it rankle in their breasts. Even imaginary evils do break the repose of some, and fill their hearts with disquietude. But it is truly pitiable that youth should suffer such little foxes to blight their fairest prospects of present enjoyment, and beset their ways with unnecessary perplexities. A little discretion and reflection might prevent the mischief; and a little sympathy and benevolence would soothe the mind burthened, and heal those differences which may exist in the social circles of the young.

But shall trivial misdemeanours interrupt the harmony, and make of no avail the social privileges of persons of age and experience? Shall the slightest provocations separate friends, cause bitter animosities, and sharp contentions to arise? Shall the spreading vine of society, its varied branches, and numerous clusters, be suffered to be overrun

and destroyed by little foxes? Rather let them be taken when young, and their mischiefs prevented. Let not the middle aged suffer mere trifles to wound their own souls, and to give poignant anguish to others, for the want of a little wisdom and sympathy. Did a worm at the root of Jonah's gourd wither and blight its fairest prospects, and mar his enjoyment? How affecting and melancholy, if in like manner, little foxes run at large, consume the tender grapes, and spoil the various branches of the vine of society! Caution, in words and actions, is necessary; but especially heed should be taken in relating unpleasant reports, would we behold the vine green and flourishing. A charitable spirit, and words fitly spoken, administer sap and life to its withered and decayed branches. How varied and endearing the goodly prospects of social circles and civil life! Then, may our actions say, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes," which must flourish and come to maturity.

3dly. *The parental relation.*

Parents may be considered as a vine, and their offspring its branches; hence their mutual prospects may be represented by clusters of tender and choice grapes. But the ties of parental and filial affection are so interwoven into their very natures, we should hardly imagine that small failings could be the means of very serious and lasting evils. Yet thousands of parents have seen their children brought to disgrace and ruin, and have accused themselves as being the authors, by their little indulgences in those things and ways which their consciences could not call right. Some who have not been taught obedience at an early age, have, in their youth, proved the shame and painful mortification of their parents, by their disobedience and unblushing impudence. On the other hand, some parents, instead of governing their children, do only provoke them to wrath. Instead of making

an unruly temper yield, they do but excite the most violent anger, and increase a malignant stubbornness. Would they only use a little faithfulness and firmness, their offspring might be trained up in the way they should go. Are children the delight of their parents ? Oh, that they would love them enough to seek their present and future well-being. They should not suffer the little foxes to spoil the vine nor its branches, nor the clusters of tender and choice grapes.

4thly. *The conjugal state.*

The relation of husband and wife may be considered as a vine abounding with tender grapes, whose fair prospects the little foxes should not be suffered to blight. What natural tie is so endearing, what union and felicity on earth are so important, and so desirable to be promoted ? And how lamentable, that little things should be the means of putting these asunder ! If conjugal affection will not exercise forbearance, what in this world will ? Notwithstanding mere trifles, even the slightest neglects do sometimes cause coldness, reproaches, and violent contentions. There are some, whose hearts are knit together in love, and yet they are frequently at variance, simply because they will not learn to bear each other's burdens. If due allowance were made for those imperfections which are common to human nature, the most of the difficulties of conjugal life would be prevented.

In general, the reason why some families are far more agreeable and happy than others, is not that they have so much better natural dispositions, but because the united head have so much better faculty of taking the little foxes, or the talent of bearing with little things. But, if the little foxes be not taken, disputes private and publick may ensue, a continued storm arise, and at last even separation take place, though not at first in the least expected. Thus little things may put asunder and blight the fairest prospects of connubial happiness.

5thly. *Let us consider the subject evangelically.*

It is probable that the church in general, and believers in particular, were more immediately designed to be represented by the words of the text. The church may be considered as the vine ; and the tender grapes may refer to young believers, as Christ himself applies to them the epithet, *little ones*. Hence, says the royal Preacher, “ Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines ; for our vines have tender grapes.”

This is evidently a caution against every thing, however plausible, which tends to hinder the prosperity of the church, and the fruitfulness of believers. That this vine should flourish and abound with tender clusters, more precious than the grapes of Eschol, the Saviour observed to his followers, “ Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” Not only is open, gross immorality in the professors of religion a burden to the vine, but also any pursuit, indulgence, or way, which is inconsistent with vital piety and practical godliness. Whatever may be considered as a waste of our precious time, or whatever engrosses too much of our attention, and tends to the neglect of the means of grace, are of such a nature. Though a certain pursuit be not exactly criminal in itself, yet by excessive indulgence it has a tendency to spoil the vine, and mar its tender grapes, like the unsuspected subtlety of the fox. The first risings of sinful thoughts and desires in believers, and the beginning of trifling pursuits, are like the little foxes, which, if not taken seasonably, will spoil the vines. Vain or trifling visits which waste much time, incur great expense, and put the mind out of a proper frame for devotion, are peculiarly injurious in this respect. Those employments or recreations that intrude on the hours that should be employed in serious meditation, self-examination, searching the scriptures, and secret prayer, are not only vanity, but chilling frosts to the soul, and mildews, whose

acrimony corrodes the most flourishing vines. Even lawful and needful pursuits and recreations, when attended with excess or inexpediency, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

They who have experienced the blessed change of conversion, ought to obey the call of Christ to arise and follow him, and to leave the world and sin behind, that they may enjoy much of his love. Thus the fruits of holiness would appear, and the vine be revived. Believers should desire to bring forth plenteously the fruits of righteousness. And those Christians who have been careful observers, perceive that the little despised foxes do much harm to the branches of the living vine. Plausible errors, trivial omissions, compliances, and indulgences, may be more general hinderances to Christian progression and usefulness, than the most distressing temptations. Satan or his emissaries may do more harm as subtle, unsuspected deceivers, than as furious persecutors. Therefore, a watch should be maintained against the very appearance of evil ; and the little foxes should be destroyed, before they become capable of important and extensive mischief.

Whether young believers, or the dearest privileges and rich blessings of the gospel, be intended by the term, *tender grapes*, the example of old professors should not only be free from severe censure and an astonishment to them, but it should be such as to emulate to good works. And let young professors realize that many eyes are watching them for little sins ; and even their imperfections, or mis-steps, for want of experience, are considered in them, by some, as mountains. The followers of Christ must not only shun immorality, but they should manifest the spirit, and copy the example of their Lord, that they may be a light to the world. They should watch with all diligence, against whatever may injure the vine ; and should cherish the tender grapes. that they come

to maturity and perfection. For this end, the blessing of heaven must be implored with importunity, for those reviving and fruitful showers which will water the vine, cause it to be green and fair, its branches to spread, and its leaves to be a pleasant shade for abundance of rich clusters of the choicest grapes.

INFERENCE.

1st. *If little things do sometimes blight the fairest prospects of human happiness, then great effects may result from minute causes.*

This truth may be illustrated both in a natural and moral point of view. In both the natural and moral world we frequently behold great and important events, connected and dependant on those that are very minute. Hence we hear the exclamation, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth."* A spark of fire is a little thing ; it is extinguished by a drop of water ; or, if not enkindled by fuel, dies of itself. Yet we know, that a spark of fire often becomes the instrument of extensive utility or mischief. A spark of fire is communicated to a magazine of powder. In a moment, massy walls of wood and stone, the pride of war and the labour of years, yield to the dreadful explosion, and scattered in ten thousand fragments, spread terror and destruction around. A spark of fire is concealed in a closet, or on the roof of a building. Shortly a family start from their slumbers, and see their dwelling with all its contents in a blaze. The flames kindle upon the adjacent buildings ; the neighbourhood is involved in the spreading ruin ; and perhaps, a city laid in ashes. Sparks of fire from the flint or match occasion blood and carnage, and spread the field of battle with the dead.

Vast is the extent of the kingdom of providence ; and the connexion of minute with great events, is a subject not merely of curiosity, but one with

* The remainder is chiefly from Doctor Porter's Tract.

which our duty and happiness are deeply concerned. A very limited acquaintance with the connexion of causes and effects, must convince us, that, in the natural and moral government of God, great things do often depend on small. A moment is scarcely noticed, but centuries are made up of moments. The mountain, that rears its stately head to the clouds, is composed of grains of sand. The river, that rolls its majestick tide to the ocean, consists of drops. On its waters, navies float; but followed to its source it becomes a rivulet, and even a spring, bubbling from a rock or some mountain. Thus the greatest events, which the world has ever witnessed, have resulted from a combination of concurrent causes, each of which might seem unimportant in itself. The tongue is a little member; yet, on the one hand, it is the spring of social life, the great cement of society; and, on the other, it is a world of iniquity, and setteth on fire the course of nature. That little member speaks a word. What then? Alienation of friends, coldness, then jealousy and enmity, ensue. And if they be persons of eminence, other tongues will cause some trivial misunderstanding to rise into consequences of incalculable importance.

The same connexion, betwixt small things and great, runs through all the concerns of our world. The incorrectness of an instructer, may cause many to have an incorrect and deficient education. The ignorance of an apothecary or physician, may send sickness or death into a family, and spread it through a town. And how often has a pestilential disease from one man, spread its infection to thousands of others. Our first parents sinned; and how have sin and death polluted and swept off their descendants from the earth in consequence of their transgression. A spark of envy in the bosom of Joseph's brethren, grew into settled enmity, and led them to aim at the destruction of his life. Here commenced a series of events, which became so

vast and so extended, as to give complexion to the affairs of two nations through all subsequent periods. Who can read the history of Joseph, and not have his mind deeply impressed with a sense of great events with minute causes.

What important events resulted from the decree of Pharaoh to destroy every Hebrew male child. To avoid the execution of this decree, a Hebrew mother resolved to commit her babe to the mercy of Providence, with no other protection from the elements and monsters of the Nile, than an ark of bulrushes. A stranger passed that way the very moment the child wept. That stranger was a woman whose heart could feel for a poor, forsaken infant; a princess, the only person in Egypt, who might safely indulge this tenderness. She saved the child, and adopted him as her son. How compassionate, how amiable, and noble her conduct! But little did that princess know what she was doing. Little did she think, that weeping infant, thus singularly rescued from death, was to be the minister of divine vengeance to her haughty father and his kingdom. Little did she imagine that the Red Sea would divide at his presence, that he was to write five books of the sacred scriptures, containing the only authentick account of the creation; and be a deliverer, legislator, and guide to the church of God.

It will appear as clear as noon-day, that great effects result from minute causes, if we take a view of the giant, Goliath, and the shepherd, David. How did the champion defy the armies of Israel, and strike terror and dismay into the hearts of the men of war, and the chief captains. At length the stripling shepherd, with faith in the Lord of hosts, using no weapons but a sling and a stone, laid prostrate before the two armies, the mighty giant. Thus a common stone, useless and unnoticed perhaps for ages in the bottom of a brook, slew the champion, routed the army of the Philis-

tines, and decided a mighty battle, on which the great interests of a nation were suspended. The beautiful and majestick temple of Jerusalem was built by the labour and wealth of a nation. Yet a single fire-brand, thrown by a common soldier of the Roman army, consumed this magnificent edifice, which had been the glory of the Jews, and the wonder of the world. How have a few licentious men in Europe, corrupt in their political and religious principles, by their conduct and writings, diffused a spirit of anarchy and licentiousness among thousands. In several places the fire which they enkindled, has burst forth into a tremendous conflagration. Like Ætna's boiling furnaces, it has poured forth rivers of flame to mar all that was fair, and to consume all that was flourishing.

On the other hand, who can estimate the vast benefit resulting to mankind from the lives and writings of men, eminently wise, active, and faithful. The happy consequences will descend to posterity, and to the end of the world. Of the thousands which might be noticed, let only one be named, and one part of his labours. Doctor Thomas Scott, in his life, wrote an exposition of the holy scriptures. How have thousands of divines, and tens of thousands of other lovers of truth already been profited by his writings. And probably millions, yet unborn, will rise up and call him blessed. He needs no monument erected over his grave and mouldering dust. His memory will be wide spread, and perpetuated by individuals and nations for ever, and his monument towereth to the heavens.

“The history of Columbus tends to show that the invisible hand of Providence may be designing the most momentous results to ourselves or the world, though we may not have enlarged views of the effects of human conduct. As we mark the wonderful events which, within the space of two centuries, have flowed from his discovery of this continent,

how must we advert with awe to Him, who attaches to the actions of an individual a train of consequences so stupendous and unexpected! In the place of dismal forests we see smiling fields and cheerful villages; instead of beasts of prey, we behold grazing herds; instead of the kindling faggot, we witness the worship of Jesus Christ; and instead of the appalling warwhoop, we listen to the grateful songs of David. From a few feeble colonies has arisen a powerful nation. The branch which our fathers planted, under the fostering care of heaven, rose, extended, invigorated. In the beautiful language of scripture, the wilderness has begun to blossom as the rose, and the desert is becoming vocal with the praises of our God."

Connected as we are with our fellow-men, our conduct, though apparently indifferent, is of vast importance. Hence we should be ever ready to assist in every laudable undertaking. Well may youth pursue useful studies with alacrity, that they may become eminently useful members of society. That knowledge which they acquire may be diffused to thousands of others. Well may instructors of youth be encouraged and rejoice, when they look forward, and consider the extensive and happy consequences, which will be the result of their labours, and of the useful knowledge which they shall have communicated. Well may parents be faithful, to bring up their children for God. A pious mother should ever be quickened in her duty, for the child of her prayers and instructions may become a blessing to the church and the world, and a star brilliant in the kingdom of celestial and eternal glory. Well may ministers of the gospel be zealously engaged to bring forth from the sacred volume, things both new and old, and patiently wait the result of their unwearied exertions, till they shall be revealed in the last great day.

SERMON VIII.

MAN, ADMONISHED OF HIS DUTY BY INFERIOR CREATURES.

PROVERBS VI. 6.

Go to the Ant, thou sluggard ; consider her ways, and be wise.

MANKIND were not made for inactivity and sloth; but for activity and diligence. Still we find they need many excitements to action and industry, in order to prevent a state of indolence, and a course of prodigality. Both from observation and the word of God, we are taught that much of the precious time, intrusted to mortals, runs to waste. Solomon, the wisest of men, beheld this, and his heart was deeply affected with the melancholy truth. He saw that many not only neglected a prudent management of their temporal concerns, but that they were also unwilling to seize the most favourable opportunity for attending to those which are eternal. He beheld many of the sons of men shamefully indolent as to a preparation for the evils incident to life, and especially to old age, and most criminally negligent and averse to spiritual duties, and eternal concerns. And as those things which have a particular reference to eternity, are of vastly greater importance, than those which may be said to end with time, he saw that folly and madness were in the heart of every one, who was not laying up a treasure for another and better state of existence.

The words of the text, in a figurative manner, show the vast importance of having something laid

up in store for the soul, when it forsakes its tenement of clay, to dwell in a world invisible, and to mortals unknown. And as the wise man saw that time is the only day of grace, the only space for repentance and state of preparation for eternity, he was grieved to the heart to behold his fellow mortals loitering in sluggishness, and squandering away this precious, this invaluable season. They would not listen—they would not consider—they would not take heed to their ways, by redeeming their time, notwithstanding he gave salutary counsel and good instruction.

But Solomon seemed to hope that although many would not hearken to his friendly admonitions, they would be led to consider their ways and be wise, if he should turn their attention to the preaching of the beasts of the field, or to creatures which have not intelligence as man. He directs them to go to the ant, an insect industrious and wise, to consider her ways, and learn a lesson of wisdom. This little creature, by her worthy example, would teach them that they ought to be greatly engaged in preparing for their future well being.

To illustrate this subject, I shall, *in the first place*, show what men need for a future day.

1st. *They need a store of spiritual food, upon which the soul may feed after death.*

Animal nature must be refreshed with animal or material food. But the soul is a spirit; and when it leaves its animal frame, or earthly tabernacle, to dwell in a world of spirits, it cannot be satisfied with that food which is designed for the body. The very nature and condition of an unbodied spirit, prevent it from being made happy by corporeal enjoyments. An intelligent mind must centre in God as the fountain and source of all good, to attain the perfection and blessedness of its existence. A departure from him fills the soul with a craving void, and nothing but a return can make up the de-

ficiency, or restore true and lasting enjoyment. We have reason to conclude, that the Lord could not make a disobedient and unbodied spirit happy, unless he should perform a constant series of miracles to produce the effect. In the invisible state, there are none of the objects of time and sense to engage the attention and gratify the mind. From what source, then, can it find delight, unless in the immediate enjoyment of that Being from whom cometh every good and perfect gift ? Were a finite spirit permitted to wander through the utmost bounds of the invisible state, it must be miserable indeed, unless it have the approbation and smiles of God. To be happy in the invisible and future state, mankind must have the bread of life, upon which their souls may feed ; and that drink, which is eternal life. The provisions of this life will not avail in the life to come. In this view is the command of the Saviour, “ Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Hence we may see that mankind need a store of spiritual food to be laid up, upon which their souls may feed after death.

2dly. *They need an atoning Saviour, and an advocate with the Father at the court of heaven.*

The treasure which they have been laying up, is for a place very different from that of heaven. They have been treasuring up for themselves wrath, against the day of wrath. Many have been very active in preparing their souls for an awful inheritance. As a miser who hoards up gold in treasure, or as the clouds treasure up rain to be poured forth upon the earth, so have they been laying up in store a treasure of iniquity against the revelation of the righteous judgement of God. And to such, without the presenting of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, a holy and just God is a consuming fire. When the sinner’s crimes shall appear, vengeance will call for his blood, except the great Saviour present his own blood as the ground of pardon and acceptance. Unless the sins of the

transgressors be cast into the depths of the sea, as it were, in consequence of the Saviour's sufferings and death, they will appear in judgement for his condemnation.

Nor can rebels of Adam's race appear without consternation in the invisible state of retribution, except the great and glorious Mediator between God and man, make intercession for them in the solemn presence of their offended Sovereign. How will guilty creatures appear in the immediate presence of their righteous and final Judge, unless they have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous ? They will not be able to stand, unless Immanuel plead their cause, and acknowledge them before his holy angels and an assembled universe, as his redeemed ones from among men. Hence, then, mankind for a future day need an atoning Saviour, and an advocate with the Father at the great court of heaven.

I proceed to notice, *in the second place*, how they may lay up a store to supply their future wants.

And will not all be anxious to know how they may make such rich provision, and attain this great and desirable end ? Will not every one be ready to comply with almost any condition ; or unremittingly pursue the hardest labours, and encounter the greatest difficulties, even through the whole of their lives ? The gain would be unspeakably great to any who would thus engage. But the pearl of great price, a store of never failing treasures, may be obtained even by rebels against the King of the universe, by doing the most reasonable things in the world. The terms are the lowest, the most favourable, and suitable, that can possibly be made.

The first thing to be done by those who would make preparation for a future day, is to repent of their sins.

Their immediate duty is to look into their wicked and rebellious hearts, and exercise repentance, to

loathe and abhor themselves for their transgressions. It is morally fit and suitable for all who have departed from God, by walking in the paths of disobedience, to exercise true evangelical repentance on the account of the malignity of their actions, and thus begin to walk in newness of life. And surely the great and infinitely blessed Jehovah could not possibly receive his guilty creatures into his favour, to treat them as his friends, on any other ground, consistently with the honour of his name, and the glory of his kingdom. If the Lord should raise a heart of enmity, a spirit of rebellion against him to a mansion of glory, while in impenitence, he would virtually declare to the universe, that his requisitions had been unreasonable and cruel, and that the rebel must be justified to the reproach of his Maker. Nor could a sinner find soul-satisfying enjoyment even in the abodes of the blessed, if his heart of impenitence should follow him there. How reasonable and suitable then, for those who would lay up a store to supply their future wants, immediately to exercise that repentance which the gospel requires, and which is unto life eternal.

2dly. *Saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the reasonable duty of every one, and what entitles to salvation.*

Since Christ has died, the just for the unjust, to make a sacrifice for sin, how reasonable for all to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and embrace him as their God and Saviour. And it is unreasonable for any to demand of the Father, that he would pardon and save them, while they continue to reject his Son, by refusing to exercise that faith, which worketh by love and purifieth the heart. God the Father would tarnish his own glory, if he should save one gospel sinner who refuses to have the Saviour reign over him; for by so doing, he would announce to the universe, that the race of Adam might as well have been saved without the death of his Son. It is necessary for

the honour of the divine law, and for the righteousness and consistency of the divine conduct, that gospel sinners believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or be damned. How adorable was the condescension of Jehovah, in devising the great and glorious scheme of man's redemption through Jesus Christ, and the great term of salvation, even faith in his name, is the lowest or most reasonable that can possibly be made. Mankind must cheerfully comply with this, or else they must pray God to let them go on in the devices of their depraved hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes, without seeing any form or comeliness in the Saviour, that they should desire him.

3dly. *Perseverance in well doing, will secure a heavenly and never failing treasure.*

Through grace, in consequence of the atonement which Christ has made, mankind may receive an everlasting reward for all those works which imply true obedience. Then why stand ye here all the day idle? To those of the sixth, ninth, or eleventh hour, says the divine Redeemer, "Go, work in my vineyard." To him that endureth to the end, eternal life is the reward, for they received every man a penny. The obedience of the heart, and perseverance in well doing, will gain an immortal prize. Thus we may see how mankind may lay up a treasure of durable riches, and have something substantial in store to supply their future wants.

I proceed, *in the third place*, to show, that they ought now to be greatly engaged in preparing for their future well being.

1st. *God, their heavenly Father, commands them immediately to engage in the work.*

When the Lord speaks, his intelligent creatures are bound to obey. An earthly parent considers his child to be under obligations to yield obedience to his wise and reasonable requisitions; but how much greater the obligations of men to yield entire

and cheerful obedience to the righteous commands of the great, the infinite Parent. Shall any think to excuse themselves from their moral obligations of submission, even of immediate compliance, by pleading that they have lived in disobedience for many years, and have no disposition to obey ? Would a disobedient child be excused for not returning to his father's house, and rendering filial obedience to his parent's commands, if he should observe that he had voluntarily strayed from his father, and openly trampled upon his authority ? Or, shall mankind be free from guilt and blame, if they plead the secret enmity of their hearts against God, and their averseness to all his reasonable requisitions to be so great that they cannot love and serve him ? How many times, and in how light a manner, are such heaven-daring excuses made, by a God-provoking world.

Perhaps some one is ready to say, I am greatly affected and alarmed at the awful wickedness and stubbornness of my heart, lest it finally sink me in perdition ; hence my plea is made with great seriousness. Yes ! and let me ask, What would you think of a child, who, in a serious and solemn manner, even in the sincerity of his heart, should declare to his father that he hated him with perfect and fixed hatred; and that he could not be persuaded to love and obey him, even by the most solicitous and endearing entreaties and persuasions ? When you seriously and candidly decide this point, then judge how vain and wicked are all those excuses which are made by mankind for not turning to the Lord, and cheerfully engaging in his service with all the powers of their souls, since he commands them immediately to engage in the all important work of preparing for their future well being.

2dly. *The patience and forbearance of God is another reason why they should not delay to engage in the work.*

It is an affecting consideration, that they who defer laying up a treasure for a future day, despise the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering. The Lord grants sinners space for repentance, and lengthens out their forfeited lives, that they may turn unto him and live. But they who abuse his supporting and governing agency, by continuing their impenitence and hardness of heart, do weary his patience and provoke his awful vengeance. And are there not some who have long abused the long suffering of God, and who have often tempted him to show his wrath, and make his power known ?

The miser, after many years of covetous success ; and the clouds, just before a storm, do greatly increase in their treasure. So they who have long abused the glorious compassion and marvellous long suffering of God, are making hasty strides in the road to ruin, and their treasure is fast increasing and rapidly redoubling to be repaid in sorrow. But is there nothing, neither in the character nor the conduct of the ever blessed God, which will lead men to take heed to their ways, and to lay up in store a goodly and never failing treasure ? If his justice will not excite them, must it be that they will not be moved neither by his grace and mercy, nor his forbearance and patience towards them ? Have redeeming grace and dying love no attractions in the view of the sons of men ? Must the pleas and intercessions of yon glorious and exalted Saviour, be set at nought and spurned ? Shall it be that they, as barren fig-trees, will bring forth no fruit unto God ? Mankind not only act unwisely by refusing to engage in the great and all important work of laying up in store a treasure upon which their souls may feed after death, but they do very wickedly, by abusing the divine patience and forbearance.

3dly. *All ought now to attend to this subject ; for it is one in which they are most highly interested.*

They who engage in this work, have eternal life begun in the soul ; and a few years' perseverance, at most, will put them in full possession of a blessed and an eternal inheritance. Short, indeed, the term for laying up a treasure ; but great and glorious the reward. How do men labour and fatigue themselves, and seize every favourable opportunity, to lay up a treasure upon earth, which must shortly fail them ! But wisdom crieth aloud, she uttereth her voice in the streets ; and, in view of a heavenly treasure, she says to every one, “ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”

The compassionate Redeemer, who well knew what is the true interest and wisdom of men, says, “ Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which shall endure unto eternal life.” They who shall so run as to obtain, will be put in possession of an unspeakable prize; but they who loiter by the way and refuse to work, will meet with a loss which will be a matter of unspeakable regret, and endless lamentation. Then let men be immediately and greatly engaged in working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is a business of their highest concern.

4thly. Men ought immediately to engage in laying up a heavenly treasure, for they have but one short space in which to perform this work.

The present state is the only day of grace—the only seed time for mortals to prepare for a great and glorious harvest. And doubtless, with many the day is far spent, and the night is at hand. Unquestionably, with multitudes to-morrow will be for ever too late to lay in store a good treasure, by sowing to the spirit that they may reap everlasting life. And how melancholy, how deplorable indeed, the state of those who in vain lament, “ The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved ! ” But will men still turn a deaf ear to all the calls of God ? When the thunders of Sinai roar around them, will they not be moved ? Are they

so stupid and sluggish as not to be aroused, notwithstanding all that the Lord has said and done? Solomon exhorts those who will not hear the voice of God, nor of his servants, calling upon them, to go to the ant, one of the little and prudent creatures which God has made, to observe her ways; and by awaking from their stupidity, to learn a lesson of wisdom. “Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard! when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come, as one that travaileth; and thy want, as an armed man.”

Of how much greater consequence is the soul-important work in which men are called to engage, than that of the ants, whose only concern is to provide for the winter! And doubtless the time of many will be much shorter to lay up a treasure for heaven, than that of the ants to prepare for their future day. But shall it be, that these little creatures, guided by instinct, lay in a store in due season, and give all diligence to have a supply for their future wants, while men, who have intelligent powers, loiter and slumber, when eternal concerns press upon them? Let men observe the propriety and wisdom of the insects of the earth, and be admonished from their ways, to learn a lesson of heavenly wisdom, lest in the book of divine providence, at the last great day, they appear in judgement against them. Let them consider the conduct of an ant, and become wise unto salvation.

REMARKS.

1st. *Are men admonished not only by the word of God, but by the ants, to be laying up a treasure in heaven? Then it cannot be owing to the want of knowledge, that they neglect this work.*

In the word of God, the pathway of life is clearly pointed out, and all nature urges men not to delay the work of preparing for the future. The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and insects of the earth; reprove them of their unmindfulness and ingratitude towards their Creator, and most bountiful Benefactor. How active are the various tribes of irrational creatures, in showing forth the praises of their Maker ! Their language to the sons of men is, O come join with us : in an intelligent and more noble way, declare his praise. But hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken ! "I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me." My hearers, look to your domestick animals. Are they as unmindful of you, as you are of your God ? Do they treat you with the neglect with which you treat your heavenly parent ? But remember this truth, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

2dly. The only reason why men neglect the duties of religion and the concerns of their souls, must be their extreme and criminal aversion to them.

Surely the motives are sufficiently great to excite the most sluggish into activity and diligence, unless they have unfeeling, obdurate hearts. If any plead their blindness, they virtually plead guilty ; for the voluntary opposition of the heart to the light and duties of the gospel, induces men to stop their ears, shut their eyes, and blind their minds. But who for this is to be blamed ? Sinners, in gospel lands, see and confess that the great concerns of religion and their souls, are of unspeakably greater importance than any or all of the pursuits and enjoyments of this present world. But if they grant these things, what makes them sleep in awful security, when the torments of hell should alarm, and the joys of heaven allure the most stupid sinner. This kind of blindness

manifests great wickedness ; for it discovers a willingness to treat the ever blessed God with continued contempt, and to be the murderers of their own souls, when they are convinced they ought to take heed.

The ants assist each other in laying up a store for the future ; but how unwilling are men to do any thing for their own salvation or that of others. They mutually agree to lay up treasures upon earth ; yet how do they fold their hands together and say, " Yet a little sleep, a little slumber," when the thought of encouraging each other to walk in the straight and narrow way, comes to their view. Then mankind are not only to be pitied but blamed, for their moral stupidity and blindness.

3dly. *From this subject we see, that as natural sloth tends to poverty, so spiritual sloth proves ruinous to the soul.*

If impenitent sinners were truly awake, and not in a state of despair, they would be much excited to do something to escape the wrath to come. Do temporal concerns demand attention ? What, then, are the claims of religion ? what the interest of an immortal soul ? what an eternity of ecstatick and increasing blessedness ?

Perhaps some wonder why the Lord does not give them a new heart, and pardon their sins, since he appears in behalf of others, and shows mercy. But were they not criminally stupid and blind, they would be astonished, that a holy and just God has so long spared their forfeited lives, and not cut them off in their sins as the cumberers of his ground. How many thousands have acted the part of the sluggard, sleeping in their sins, till they have opened their eyes in torment ! And is it not now as dangerous to say, " Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep ?" Says Solomon to every one of this description, " Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise."

4thly. *Let all take the alarm, and awake unto righteousness, lest the wrath of God come upon them to the utmost.*

Let saints arise and trim their lamps. They should ever be greatly engaged in laying up a treasure in heaven, that they may reap a rich harvest, a great and glorious reward. Their redemption is now nearer than when they first believed ; hence, they should give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. The present, especially, calls for extraordinary exertions and zeal in the cause of the Redeemer. The Lord Jesus is doing great and wonderful things for Zion. In a very special manner is he blessing the exertions of his people, and enlarging the borders of his glorious kingdom. And is this a time for his people to sleep ? Let them awake, be up and doing, and not tarry to make excuses, but prepare to meet the bridegroom.

Let impenitent sinners awake, and speedily flee to the mountain of safety. Have they not folded their hands together long enough, crying, " Yet a little sleep, a little slumber." It is now almost impossible to awaken some, and will they yet sleep ? Are they determined not to see, till the light of eternity opens their eyes ? Will they turn away from the light gleaming and bursting upon their sight from the divine pages of the gospel ? Yonder, methinks, I see the Saviour with very solemn but cheerful looks. What heartfelt expressions flow from his lips ! Rise, sinner ; he calleth thee. Come, O come to Jesus. " The Spirit and the Bride say come. Let him that heareth, say come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." If any will yet sleep, it must be for their own cost : " But awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." Awake to righteousness ; lay up for yourself a treasure in heaven, that your soul may live, and for ever feast and rejoice with the innumerable

company of the redeemed at the great marriage supper of the Lamb.

Awake to a sense of your dignity and momentous responsibility. Do not imagine that you are a being but one grade above the animal creation; for your immortal soul exalts you far above them; yea, it renders your existence of infinite worth. Then think and act as becometh your dearest, present, and eternal well-being, and thus you will prepare to be an inhabitant of the celestial regions. Be awake whilst in health, to the importance of your preparing for sickness and death; and go to the word of God continually, that you may see the wisdom of striving with your utmost efforts for those varied, those exalted and eternal glories, which through grace are to be the recompence of the just.

Reader and hearer, be not only admonished by inferiour creatures to provide for the future, but let the glorious principalities of the heavenly world, let the dignified powers and blessed station of angels, and the exalted felicity of saints in glory, excite and emulate you in the ways of righteousness, and in all the duties of self-denial, that you may be made conquerors over sin and Satan, and be crowned with a glorious immortality. Would you be emulous for an honourable, though temporal station, on this foot-stool of Heaven? Aspire then for a holy habitation with superiour beings, and for the grandeur, not of feeble men, but of your God.

SERMON IX.

CONNEXION OF OBEDIENCE AND BLESSINGS.

MARK III. 5.

Stretch forth thine hand.

ALL the ways of God are perfect and right, whether man be reconciled to them or not. He is the Lord and Sovereign of the universe, and all his intelligent creatures are bound to render implicit obedience to his requisitions; for no one of them is unreasonable. Both the general laws and positive precepts of the supreme Ruler are such as are worthy a being supremely wise and good. Notwithstanding, there is a controversy between the supreme moral Governour, and his rebellious subjects on the earth, his foot-stool. Their language is, His ways are hard and grievous; not suited to the state and condition of weak and erring mortals. But says the Lord, "Come now, and let us reason together. Are not my ways equal? and are not your ways unequal?" In the most tender compassion, he condescends to reason with men, even the rebellious, who find fault with his ways, and call him a hard master.

The words of the text, with those in connexion, are an interesting narrative, and serve to show both the depravity of the human heart, and the benevolence of God towards man. "Jesus entered into the synagogue; and there was a man there, which had a withered hand. And the Pharisees watched him whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And

he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he said unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil ? to save life or to kill ? But they held their peace. And when he looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out ; and his hand was restored whole as the other."

By this miraculous restoration at the effort of the man, we are taught that human exertion in obedience to the divine command, is a means of obtaining blessings from God. The subject will be illustrated with considerable variety.

1st. *Domestick and temporal concerns.*

The conduct of mankind in secular life, may serve to illustrate and evince the necessity of human exertions, to obtain what are denominated the common blessings of Providence. The comforts and conveniences of life are not obtained by idleness and sloth ; but by industry and diligence. The earth would not yield her increase in such rich profusion, were it not cultivated by the hand of man. There must be ploughing and sowing, harvesting and ingathering, that the wants of her numerous inhabitants may be supplied. Not only activity, but times and seasons are to be observed, for committing seeds to the earth, and for gathering her precious fruits. Hence, the husbandman at a suitable time casts forth seed, then patiently waits for the early and latter rain, and in due season reaps a rich harvest, as a reward of his labours.

The earth is a vast and inexhaustible storehouse, from which, by proper means and exertions, the whole human family may derive the necessities of life. But without human effort, only a small portion of the globe could subsist. Even in Paradise, Adam was to till the ground ; and since the fall, human labour is necessarily increased. After the flood the promise was made, " While the earth

remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." But this does by no means imply, that should mankind fold their hands together as the sluggard, and call for a little more sleep, that the earth would spontaneously abound with all her productions, and lavish on man her choicest goods. It is designed as an encouragement for human exertion. And, in similar circumstances, where a people are the most industrious and economical, there the good things of this life are enjoyed in the greatest profusion. All nature teems with life and activity; and to the slothful, her voice of admonition is, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise." As it is true, that without the blessing of God, in giving fruitful showers and the genial influence of the sun, the labours of man would be vain, so is it equally true, that in the constitution of natural things, we may be led to see the necessity of human activity, to obtain what are denominated the common blessings of Providence.

2dly. *Individual prosperity in earthly good things, is connected with human exertion.*

It is true, that riches are distributed by the hand of Providence, whether mankind be born to affluence, or whether they acquire wealth by the means of their labours. It is also a matter of fact, that the industrious do not always become wealthy, nor that riches are always to men of understanding. But still, we often see this truth verified, that "idleness will clothe a man with rags; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."

Property is generally acquired by the use of means; either by bodily or mental exertions, and frequently by both. Some, by persevering labour and an enterprising spirit, not only obtain a competence, but accumulate great riches. Persons in want, are convinced that human activity is the proper means to relieve their necessities. Such may trust in Providence; but this is only by looking to

God for a blessing on their labours or upright exertions. And we may frequently see from the conduct of such, that necessity is the mother of invention. The worthy poor man does not give himself up to idleness; but he gives diligence, by some honest calling, to obtain food and raiment, and the varied comforts of life. Whether any one be more or less successful in the lawful pursuits of secular concerns, he must depend on the blessing of God to crown his endeavours with success. Still this dependance is not a discouragement to exertion; but a ground or reason to excite to action. Not only the word of God, but also the conduct of mankind, serves to show that human activity is a means for individuals to obtain earthly good things.

3dly. *In time of sickness or of some natural calamity, human activity and means are necessary to obtain a blessing from God.*

Although it is appointed unto man once to die, and that his days are numbered with the Almighty as the days of a hireling, that he cannot pass; yet where life is prolonged, means are included. In times of sickness of an alarming nature, how quickly is the physician called, and how carefully his prescriptions observed! In some cases, without his assistance, life would not be endangered; yet in ten thousand instances, without his speedy aid, death would inevitably ensue; whereas, through his instrumentality the years of many are multiplied. Still it is the blessing of God only which can give efficacy to medical aid, to raise from the borders of the grave, and restore to health. How are the most skilful exertions baffled, unless he give efficiency! But notwithstanding the keys of life and of death are in the hands of God, yet how readily do mankind exert themselves in all the constituted methods to preserve life and promote health! And whether the Lord grant blessings in an ordinary or miraculous manner, he has

instituted the connexion of obedience and blessings, and demands human effort. Sometimes, however, men despise the directions from heaven, and would prescribe the means to be used for their own selves, as if they were wiser than their Maker.

The story of Naaman, captain of the Assyrian host, and who was a leper, may be happily brought to view in this place. By a little Hebrew maid, he hears of a prophet in Israel. With a letter from the king of Assyria, he departs, taking ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment, as a price or present for his healing. So Naaman came with his horses and his chariot, and stood at the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times; and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith unto thee, Wash and be clean. Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." We may notice that Naaman despised simple means, and desired to have pompous ones substituted; and that the advice of his servants was the means which induced him to follow the directions of the prophet, without which his leprosy must have remained upon him.

The Saviour's anointing the eyes of the blind man with clay, and his restoring sight, are worthy of consideration. Why was clay used, and not proper eye-salve? Because the power and blessing of God must be made to appear very conspicuously. Hence he would use means, destitute of any inherent virtue or efficacy, that the efficiency might appear manifest from God alone.

Let us attend to the words of the text. To the man whose hand was withered, says the Saviour, "Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other." The question now arises, why was the man commanded to stretch forth his hand, when he laboured under a natural inability? I answer, because means was to be made to appear, to be inseparably connected with the end, or the restoration of the hand. The moment the man made an effort to raise his hand, which he was unable of himself to do, power was communicated from the Saviour to restore its vital energies, that it might be raised. Divine agency immediately accompanied human, and unless the man had made an attempt to comply with the command, we have not the smallest evidence that his hand would have been restored. Had he, at that time, made objections to the requisition of the Saviour, or had he formed excuses on the account of his impotence, probably the curse of Heaven would have doomed his soul and body to perish for ever. Though means are to be used, the power and excellence must appear to be from God. Thus we may see, that in time of sickness, or of some natural calamity, human exertions are necessary to obtain the divine blessing.

4thly. *It is through the blessing of God, and by human exertions, that our natural talents are improved.*

In the first period of our existence, we are only human beings in miniature. The works of nature and the privileges of society, are the great inlets of

knowledge; but these are so varied and extensive, that we may make constant improvements in learning those things which are becoming dependant and accountable beings. When we behold the wonders of creation, if we duly exercise our minds, we may contemplate the being and perfections of God; "for the invisible things of him may be clearly seen from the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." But, if we exert not our intellectual powers by reflection, we may be as stupid as the brutes, notwithstanding all the wonderful operations of the divine hand.

From the blessings of education and society, we may obtain clear and enlarged views of the various doctrines and duties of the gospel. Some have far more extensive opportunities of instruction than others; yet still, in all cases, much depends on human effort. The light of creation, providence, and revelation, must not be shut out of the mind, but improved, would we form consistent and exalted views of the character of God, and of his wondrous works. It is not only through human activity, that the mind is expanded in all its faculties, but human exertions are necessary, that it make use of proper means, and be engaged in suitable employments. Our dispositions and manners depend much on our own forming. It is true, that our gifts and privileges are blessings from God; but their improvement is inseparably connected with human activity.

5thly. It is through the blessing of God, that the minds of any are deeply impressed with a sense of divine truth; but the agency of man is not excluded.

That any of the human race are awakened and convicted, is solely the work of grace; for mankind, in a moral point of view, are asleep, and do not wish to be disturbed from their slumbers. The Holy Spirit is the great agent to awaken and convince men that they are sinners, and make them feel their

guilt; but their agency is necessary to cherish the impressions of the Spirit. The light and force of divine truth will now and then break in, and shine into the minds of men, which, by their exertions, they may either kindle or quench.

To have the mind habitually impressed and open to conviction, requires serious meditation and prayer. Some have their minds occupied with light and trifling thoughts much of their time; because they are pleased with vain things, and exert themselves to bar the avenues of the soul against the arrows of conviction. On the other hand, they who have generally solemnity of mind, strive to banish sinful and vain thoughts, as an enemy to seriousness. Some resort to the pleasures and amusements of life, that they may lose their serious impressions. Others seek serious company and religious conversation; deeply solicitous, lest they finally resist the strivings of the Spirit. From experience and from the warnings and cautions to men not to quench the Holy Spirit, we may see that human exertion is a means of obtaining the blessing of having the mind deeply impressed with a sense of divine truth.

6thly. *The work of conversion is truly the work of God; still, the agency of man is included.*

To be converted, is to be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. It is to be translated from the kingdom of Satan, and to be brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son—to be brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. But it is said to be the work of God, to take away the old and stony heart, and to give a new heart, or a heart of flesh: that is, a heart of supreme love to God, repentance for sin, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and all other Christian graces. Yet mankind are commanded to make them a new heart, to exercise holy or gracious affections. Hence, we may be led to see in the work of conversion, that although the Lord is the efficient cause, yet man is rendered ac-

tive in the work. Divine and human agency are inseparably connected ; and both essential, that the sinner may be born again. In this great and all-important, essential work, the time and degree of conviction are greatly varied. Some for a considerable time, are distressed in their souls, and burdened, as it were, with the pains of hell. Others, with sharp and pungent convictions, are quickly delivered from the bondage of sin and death. Some are more peculiarly excited by terror and guilt; others are most deeply impressed and affected in view of the grace, mercy, and forbearance of God. But the effect is the same ; from children of darkness, to become children of light.

Perhaps some are ready to say with Nicodemus, How can these things be ? Receive light from the words of the text: "Stretch forth thine hand." The man, sensible of his natural inability, was stripped of all hope or confidence in himself; therefore his only encouragement and trust were in the compassion and power of the Saviour. Thus he was enabled, and did stretch forth his hand. Then let those who despair of help in themselves, on the account of their moral inability, their guilt, pollution, and wretchedness, submit themselves to God, relying solely on his grace and mercy through his Son, for pardon and salvation. This is the straight and narrow way, that children of wrath and heirs of hell, may become the children of God and heirs of heaven. It is through the grace of God alone, by the use of means and human exertions, that man can escape the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life. Would any desire to have the deadly leprosy of sin healed by some pompous external reformation or performance, they must be disappointed; for the great physician of souls alone can heal them. Let them not like Naaman despise the means and way which God has appointed, and glory in the device of human wisdom. None can possibly merit heaven ; and would they gladly pur-

chase it with silver or gold, as Simon Magus would the gift of miracles, they and their money must perish together. As heavy laden, of a broken and contrite heart, their language must be, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

It was truly the work of God that the apostle Paul was converted; and yet how active was he in the work! The light of heaven brought him to the earth; and with deep humility, he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And now, behold, he prayeth. Here we have exhibited a most pungent, sudden conviction, and an instance of wonderful conversion. The trembling jailer, under keen conviction, cries out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And with ready and active obedience, he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and was converted. Then let those who are dead in trespasses and sins, repent, arise, and call upon God, if peradventure the thoughts of their heart be forgiven them.

Repentance is the gift of God; yet it is the sinner who repents and awakes to newness of life. In this view we hear the command, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Mankind, whilst in a state of impenitence and alienation from God, are willingly bound with the bonds and adamantine chains of sin and death; and it is the agency of the Divine Spirit which makes them willing to be released, and active in being delivered from the powers of darkness. They are the willing slaves of sin; but divine grace enables them to become the willing servants of Christ. From Christian experience, and from the examples recorded in the sacred oracles, we may be led to see that human agency is connected as essential to the obtaining of the inestimable blessing of conversion, which is acknowledged to be the work of God.

7thly. Obedience is a means of obtaining the blessing of sanctification from God.

In conversion that good work is begun which is to be perfected unto the day of Jesus Christ. The soul that is renewed by the spirit of God, is to grow in grace and Christian knowledge. And the one who is active and faithful, will have his path like that of the just, which groweth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. The Christian warfare cannot be successfully maintained without persevering human exertions ; although thanks belongeth to God, who giveth us the victory. The scriptural direction on this subject is, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." Although believers are dependant on the grace of God, that they be more and more conformed to the image of his Son, still their agency and exertions are not to be diminished. They must lead watchful, prayerful, and godly lives, and glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are his. The scriptures abound with exhortations, warnings, and encouragements towards believers, that they be not slothful, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. While they are not to trust in themselves, but in God who quickeneth them ; still the manner in which they must trust in him, is only by pressing forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus. Hence human exertion, in obedience to the divine command, is the constituted means of obtaining the blessing of sanctification from God.

INFERENCES.

1st. *They who neglect the means of grace, "neglect their own salvation."*

We have seen from this subject, that both in the natural and moral world, the Lord has established means in order to obtain blessings ; and they who neglect them, forsake their own mercies. The means of the gospel are external and internal. The external are the Sabbath, the preaching or

reading of the word, and other opportunities of instruction. The internal, are serious meditation, reflection, secret prayer, and a determination to shun evil, and cleave to that which is good. And while we behold some highly prizes the institutions of the gospel, we may see them lightly esteemed by others. So while the same means are proving a savour of life unto life to some; to others they are a savour of death unto death. Gospel means serve either to render the mind serious, and renew the heart, or they harden those who resist them. They must prove means of conviction, conversion, sanctification, and salvation, or of an aggravated condemnation. They will not remain void; but will be a means of preparing for heaven, or of sinking the soul deeper in hell. It is a solemn and dread truth, that to neglect the means of grace, is to neglect our own salvation.

2dly. *We may see, there must be disobedience to draw down the divine curse.*

Some people imagine sin to be a mere calamity sent upon them, which they abhor, and from which they are groaning to be delivered. But would they open their eyes, they would see that they roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues, and that they are not anxious to be freed from it, but only from the wages of sin, which is the second death. They who drink down iniquity as the ox drinketh water, love all the sins in which they indulge, although they may dread their future punishment. Do any imagine that necessity or fate has bound them with the slavish chains of sin? Mistaken souls! Their own exertions, their repeatedly hardening their hearts against the truth, their fixed habits of sinning, are the barriers and mountains in the way of their salvation. They are the active agents in forming their shackles of sin; and slaves to Satan, not by fatality, but by being willingly led as his captive.

Let not any be deceived, and imagine they hate

sin, merely because they have a slavish fear of punishment. They who hate it, seek to be delivered from its internal dominion, as from a loathsome and deadly leprosy of the soul. They fold not their hands together in idle wishes, but awake to righteousness. To be dead in sin is not merely a calamity, but it is to be active in the ways of unrighteousness, and to love the paths of disobedience.

3dly. *A person may be brought near the kingdom of God, and still fail of salvation.*

Although conversion is an instantaneous work, wrought by the spirit of God, yet there are previous stages of awakening and conviction. And a person may be brought near that steadfast degree of seriousness and anxiety for his soul, in which the Lord generally shows mercy, and yet go back. He may by degrees turn back from the very gate of heaven, and at last have his conscience seared as with a hot iron. An affecting and alarming truth, which should sink with deep weight into the minds of the thoughtful. How heart-rending must it be to any in wo, to look back into this world, and see that they were just entering into the kingdom of God, and yet failed of salvation.

How will they reproach themselves for their folly, and be burdened with aggravated guilt; because they did not enter the kingdom of heaven, before the door of mercy was for ever shut, and whilst there was room even for them. O how precarious the probationary state of sinners! especially the case of an awakened sinner, how peculiarly interesting and momentously important! The relapse of such, even in this life, is very affecting, and matter of deep lamentation; but what will be the cutting reflections—how can they be endured—what way will the thoughts rove—and how can the condition of an awakened, but doubly hardened, and finally impenitent gospel sinner, be any other than that which is the most insupportable! Reader, or hearer, if this be peculiarly applicable to your situ-

ation, beware what you do ! be entreated to be wise for your own present peace, and for the sake of an eternal destiny of blessedness.

4thly. *The subject naturally suggests the inquiry, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"*

What calculations and exertions for the merchant to gain an earthly and fading treasure ! What are the toils of the farmer to accumulate perishing wealth ! How does the professional man exert all the powers of soul and body, that he may be distinguished among men ! Then may we strive for the rewards of a glorious immortality, and to be the favourites of all the blessed in the universe.

Whether at the sixth, ninth, or eleventh hour, the Saviour calls to work in his vineyard. Then let youth, middle aged, and aged, feel interested in this subject, and work while it is called to-day ; for the night shortly cometh, in which no man can work. There is work enough yet to do, and the reward is as great and glorious as is worthy a God to bestow. Heaven, earth, and hell, call loudly upon all to be diligent in doing the will of their heavenly Father. Time and eternity present motives of infinite magnitude. The salvation of the soul demands, that "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Shall a mortal creature, in view of his immortal interests, remain idle ? Rather by diligence in active obedience, let us bear much fruit towards God, that so a glorious entrance shall be administered into the kingdom of his dear Son in eternal life.

SERMON X.

A VAIN CURIOSITY REPROVED.

JOHN XXI. 22.

What is that to thee? follow thou me.

THE directions of the word of God are as varied as the circumstances of man require. They are suited to his fallen state; and calculated to lead him in the pathway of life. The blessed Saviour was ever ready to give salutary counsel; and his instructions discover superior excellence, because they were so wisely and timely given. He who spake as never man spake, was on every occasion faithful, and would direct the attention and pursuit of man to his dearest interest, both for time and for eternity. No favourable opportunity was unimproved, nor seasonable instruction withheld. His words were ever fitly spoken, whether of compassion or severity; of encouragement or rebuke.

After having put the question to Peter three different times, "Lovest thou me," he adds, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved, following, which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter see-

ing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

Peter had earnestly professed his readiness to die with Christ; yet, when put to the trial, he shamefully failed him. But our Lord next assured him, that he would at length be required, and enabled to perform that engagement. In his youth he had been used to gird himself, and to walk at liberty as he pleased. But in his old age, he would be required to stretch out his hands, that others might bind him, and carry him to endure those sufferings, at which nature would be reluctant. This signified the death by which he would glorify God, as a martyr for the truth.

Jesus next called upon him to signify his readiness to adhere to his cause, even unto death, by rising up and following him; with which Peter complied without hesitation. But turning about, he saw John also, without any command, showing the same willingness to suffer death for the sake, and after the example of his beloved Lord. This led Peter to inquire, What he was to do? Was he also to be a martyr? To this our Lord replied, That if it were his will he should abide on earth till his coming, that was no concern of Peter's, who ought not to indulge a vain curiosity, but to follow him. This would be an evidence of his readiness to adhere to his instructions, to copy his example, and to suffer for his sake. *Till I come*, may imply Christ's return to that place; or to the destruction of Jerusalem; or to the final judgment.

This illustration of the inquiry of Peter, and the answer of the Saviour, may lead us to see that mankind are apt to inquire into those things, in which they are not immediately concerned, rather than into those in which they are most deeply interested. Some particular subjects of inquiry of this kind, will be noticed and illustrated.

1st. *A peculiar proneness to queries, respecting the state of individuals as prosperous or adverse.*

As it respects the common affairs of life, some discover a fondness and inquisitiveness to become acquainted with the concerns of others, to which they are neither called by duty nor interest. Mankind may with propriety inquire into the situation of their neighbours, as it respects either their prosperity or adversity. But how careful should they be to possess a right spirit and intention, when such inquiries are made. Would they learn the welfare of others to rejoice with them, and not for envy, they do well. Would they inquire into their misfortunes, to sympathize with them and afford relief, instead of rejoicing in their calamities, their conduct would be truly becoming and commendable.

Objects of distress and charity are to be sought out, that the balm of consolation may be administered to their minds, and the hand of plenty reached forth to supply their wants. Inquiries of such a nature are truly laudable, and have the approbation and benediction of heaven. In the varied pursuits and transactions of life, would any wish to know the concerns or state of others, to benefit them, the direction of the Saviour, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," secures from censure, and commends. But when any would pry into the affairs of their fellow men, and indulge a vain curiosity to become more acquainted with their circumstances than their own, the words of the text should be applied: "What is that to thee? follow thou me." Rather let such more carefully mind their own business, and meddle less by their inquisitiveness into the prospects of others.

Happy would it indeed be, if none merited a more severe rebuke. But some discover a restlessness to pry into the secrets, and learn the disappointments of others, to spread them abroad, and do an injury. Hence, not only a propensity for

curiosity, but a malignant disposition is manifest. Some are ever ready to hear of the failings of others, not to weep for their sins in secret, but to make them publick. This is frequently done by persons who themselves can derive no benefit, nor be serviceable to the community. And we are even taught in the sacred oracles, that some are forward to pull out a mote from their brother's eye, when they have a beam in their own eye. But such persons would do well to bear in mind the reply, "Physician, heal thyself."

Watchfulness should begin at home, as it respects either secular business, or propriety of conduct in ordering the common affairs of life. Let individuals thoroughly understand and regulate their own temporal pursuits, and the concerns of the community will be well. Let them discharge the various duties which they owe to themselves and others, rather than be anxious to know the particulars or peculiarities of their fellow men. Let each one feel interested to attend to his own calling as it relates to the pursuits or calamities of life, and this will serve to check a fondness and inquisitiveness to become acquainted minutely with the prospects of others, to which duty does not call.

2dly. *Some persons discover a vain curiosity in discoursing on the entrance of sin into the world.*

Such an inquiry may be properly made, as it is a subject of vast importance, and in which we are interested. But divine revelation must be taken for our light, and circumscribe our inquiries. Now the sacred oracles inform us, that through the temptation of the serpent, our first parents violated the positive command of God, fell from their holy estate, into a state of sin and condemnation; and that in consequence of their transgression, all their posterity become sinners. And without the Bible for our guide, when and how sin entered the world, we could not determine. But the curious minded press the inquiry farther. Did the Lord bring

about the fall of man himself ? Or did he only give permission ? Or why, that is, what are the reasons that sin was permitted to enter, if he could have prevented it by supernatural power ?

What is that to thee, vain man ? If neither reason nor revelation can answer our queries, shall we seek to be wise above what is written ? The things which are revealed on this subject, belong to us, and should bound our inquiries ; for secret things belong to God. Because the Lord has not made known all the reasons, or given all the information which he might have done concerning the entrance of sin into the world, must his infinite wisdom be arraigned before the tribunal of human wisdom ? As it is a solemn and alarming fact, that we are sinners against a holy and just God, rather let us seek to be delivered from the dominion and wages of sin. The inquisitive and vain search for the manner of its first entrance into the world, little concerns us ; but how we shall be delivered from its pollution, as a deadly leprosy of the soul, is an inquiry of the utmost importance.

Take an example for illustration. Suppose a man to be roused from his midnight slumbers by the noise of a thief, plundering his house. He hears him pillaging his coffers of his only treasure, which, if carried off, must render him bankrupt, and reduce his family to poverty. But he searches his house with the utmost diligence from top to bottom, to find the place of the thief's entrance, instead of securing him ; and meanwhile suffers him to escape. Alas, poor man ! for his folly he is ruined. Had he acted with wisdom, he would first have secured his treasure. Then may we not indulge a vain curiosity respecting the entrance of sin into the world ; or be anxious to know those reasons which are hid in the divine mind, for we are apt to inquire into those things in which we are not immediately concerned, rather than into those in which we are most deeply interested.

3dly. *Some persons entertain singular ideas, and make curious inquiries concerning Melchisedek.*

They have a right to be informed concerning him ; but they should be content, when they have all the instruction which can be given. The sacred historians give no account of his parentage or pedigree, as in the case of the priests appointed by the law, and who were all required to prove their descent from Aaron. Hence he is represented to be without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually. Melchisedek is introduced into the sacred history as a priest of the most high God, without father, mother, or genealogy, that he might the more exactly typify that high priest, who, as the Son of man, had no earthly father ; and as the Son of God, was without mother, and who was appointed to the priesthood without deducing his pedigree from Aaron. Nothing is said of Melchisedek respecting the beginning of his life, or the end of his days and priesthood, that he might be a type of the Son of God, whose existence is from eternity to eternity, and who had no predecessor or successor in his meritorious and perpetual priesthood. In all these respects, the silence of the scriptures is doubtless intentional ; and refers from the type to the great Antitype, who once offered himself a sacrifice for sin, and ever liveth to make intercession for the saints.

Now if any persons have not all the information their curiosity would demand concerning Melchisedek, they may reflect for their comfort, that they are not very deeply interested in the subject. Their serious and devout inquiry should be, to form clear and exalted views of the person and offices of Christ, and to follow him. *His* character and priesthood are abundantly and clearly made known. He is the foundation of the gospel, and of all our

hopes of future bliss. He is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. To believe in him, is life; but to deny him, death. In his divinity and humanity, his life and death, we are immediately concerned. His holy life should be kept in our minds as the perfect pattern of imitation. How conspicuous are his zeal and perseverance in doing his father's will; and with what lustre do his patience and meekness shine! Let it be our inquiry, then, to form exalted and adoring views of his divine character, and to follow him in his imitable examples of obedience. They that exalt him, will be exalted; but they who refuse to have him reign over them, will be confounded. While all the angels of God worship him, may it ever be our chief study to know, to love, and serve him.

4thly. *Many are the vain propositions respecting the state of those destitute of gospel means.*

Some persons who appear to have but little anxiety for themselves as sinners, and exposed to destruction, are fond of proposing queries concerning the condition of the heathen world. But this is certain, that they who do not feel deeply interested for their own salvation, cannot have much solicitude for the salvation of others. Hence cavils arise, Why the Lord did not, even by miracles, have the gospel preached to all nations; or why are so many of the human race left in heathenish darkness? But they who thus cavil, do not daily address the throne of divine grace in their behalf; and perhaps they have never contributed one cent to assist in sending the gospel to them. Now what profit can there be in such queries? If any feel interested for the welfare of heathenish nations, let their prayers and alms ascend up as a memorial before God, that the Sun of Righteousness may arise and shine into those dark and benighted corners of the earth. Whatever conjectures any may form concerning their condition and pros-

pects, they can be of no avail, unless they influence to exertion to send them the gospel means of salvation.

The first and immediate concern of those in gospel lands, should be to embrace and profess the gospel ; for then they may feel deeply interested that others also enjoy its inestimable blessings. And this thought should deeply affect the minds of those who cavil, that, if they who enjoy the meridian of gospel light, be not saved through its influence, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, and the nations of the heathen, in the day of judgement, than for them. How inconsistent is the conduct of those who do not wisely improve, but abuse their own exalted religious privileges, that they be often proposing fruitless queries about the state of those who are not thus highly exalted. They who are destitute of the light of the gospel, do need the pity of those who live in gospel lands ; yea, they are in perishing need of gospel light and means. But let us be merciful to our own selves ; let our own hearts be imbued and influenced by the benevolent spirit of the gospel ; and then our cavils will be turned into the most solemn inquiries, how we shall reach forth to them the word of God, and be the happy agents of sending the bread of life. While we weep for ourselves and those around us, let our queries be turned into fervent prayers, and our idle wishes into acts of charity, for the destitute and wretched pagans. Then may we hope that they will participate in like glorious privileges and blessings with us. Yea, we may see some who, in the last great day, will rise up as saved through our exertions, and call us blessed.

5thly. Some persons are apt to inquire concerning the future condition of infants, whether they will all be saved or not.

But this is a subject in which they are not immediately and deeply interested ; for all they can

do is to commend them to the grace of God, and implore his blessing. They may propose many queries, and indulge in trifling speculations; but to what profit? If the lives of infants be spared, they who have the care of them may bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, at a very early age. For this duty and privilege they should feel a deep and lively interest. We may converse and receive instruction concerning the state of infants, if we take the scriptures for our guide. But skeptical disputes and angry contentions concerning them, are injurious, and to be avoided. The inquiry may be, Are infants born in a state of perfect holiness? I answer, no. For David says concerning himself, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." And from inspiration we are taught, that all are estranged from their birth. The scriptures nowhere teach us that mankind, in their native state, are holy, but sinful.

But are all who die in infancy, through the grace of God and the atonement to be saved? Whether the word of God is sufficiently full and decisive on this point, so as to furnish a positive answer, I cannot tell. Suppose it is not: "What is that to thee?" The sacred oracles very fully teach parents their personal duties, and those they owe their tender offspring, which is all that immediately and deeply concerns them. But how foolish and inconsistent to hear men engage in warm disputes and bitter contentions respecting the condition of infants, who, instead of teaching their children of understanding, the ways of godliness, by their examples, are leading them in the ways of ungodliness and perdition. Such are more concerned for queries and disputes, than for the dearest interests of their children. Their inquiries are into those things in which they are not immediately concerned, rather than into those in which they and their offspring are most deeply interested.

6thly. *The inquiry is frequently made, whether the greater part of the human race will be saved or lost.*

A certain one asked the Saviour, “Are there few that be saved?” And he said, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” The man does not appear to have had any ill design, although he proposed a curious question. Our Lord, therefore, did not give him a direct answer; but took occasion to inculcate this important exhortation, that mankind should not be solicitous to know how many will be saved, but to secure their own salvation. In the thousand years of the millennium, doubtless the chief part will be saved. But in that period a far greater number will people the globe, than all who shall have existed before. The consequence must be, that a far greater number of human beings will finally be saved than lost.

7thly. *Another inquiry is often made, in what part of the universe are heaven and hell?*

Some conjecture, that one of the planets or fixed stars is the place of the blessed; others, that it is far beyond the starry heavens, and that this earth will be the final abode of the wicked. But to every query of such a nature, the proper answer is, “What is that to thee?” The Lord hath not revealed this, and we are not immediately concerned to know, where is the place of final destiny either for the righteous or the wicked. The doctrine of future rewards and punishments is fully made known, and we are deeply interested in these solemn truths. Then our serious inquiry should be, to know how we may escape the second death, and inherit eternal life. It is of the utmost importance for us, to be delivered from the bondage of sin and death, and to obtain that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. To follow Christ is both our duty and our immortal interest. There is such a place as a heaven, and also a hell. To be an inha-

bitant of the former, will be infinite gain; but of the latter, infinite loss. Where these places are, availeth not; but to know what manner of spirit we possess, is to foresee our eternal doom. In the word of God we may behold, as in a glass, our own character as saints or sinners; and discover our future glorious recompence, or dread inheritance. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, from the several views which we have taken of this subject, “What is that to thee? follow thou me.”

REMARKS.

1st. *Discourses of a novel nature are calculated to please some though they may not feel deeply interested.*

A spirit of novelty is in some degree common to all men; and to some, peculiarly so. Such, like the Athenians, would spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing. And should they be gratified, their imaginations would be entertained, but their understandings would not be edified with the most solemn and important truths. To grow in knowledge, seems to be natural to the mind of man. But he should be careful not to indulge a vain curiosity for mere novelty; but to add to his stock of knowledge, by treasuring up new ideas from the many varied and interesting topicks, which relate to present usefulness, and future felicity. The field is so vast from the word, the works, and the providence of God, that we may ever be improving in the knowledge of those things, which are suited to the dignity of rational and immortal beings. New and interesting scenes and events will ever be before us, and we shall never be circumscribed for the want of proper objects to excite our wonder and admiration. Then may a taste for novelty be in subordination, and the queries of a lively imagination in subjection to the nobler powers of reason and understanding, that our inquiries and improvements may be suited to the dignity of our nature and high responsibility.

2dly. Then may we search the scriptures, and grow in the knowledge of those things, which the Lord has abundantly and clearly revealed.

If we pursue any other knowledge to the neglect of this, we are only catching at shadows, whilst losing the substance. We are not made for the purpose of amusing ourselves, but to grow wise for eternity, from the instructions of heavenly wisdom. All those doctrines and truths contained in the sacred pages, and which are peculiar to revelation, are new. None of the human race could ever have discovered them, had they not been blessed with a divine revelation. The particular account of the creation and the fall of man, the work of redemption and way of salvation through Jesus Christ, are peculiarities of revelation. Hidden beauties, new and rising wonders, are concealed from the view of many of the curious between the lids of the Bible, because they do not make the word of life the man of their counsel. How various and interesting are the subjects of divine revelation, of things both new and old, of those which are past, and which are yet to come ! The account of the conduct, condition, and designs of those invisible spirits, the holy and sinning angels, should most seriously affect us ; for like them, and even with them, we are deeply interested. O the wonders, the beauties, and glories of the person, character, and offices of the Redeemer, the only Mediator between God and man ! How sublime, and amazingly momentous the description of the general resurrection and great judgement day ! In the word of God we have an interest vast as eternity ; and to have a saving knowledge of its sacred truths, is to be an heir of immortal glory.

SERMON XI.

THE VALUE AND USE OF MONEY.

ECCLESIASTES X. 19.

Money answereth all things.

To esteem every thing according to its real worth, is the part of true wisdom. But for this it is necessary to have correct views of things earthly and temporal, and of those that are heavenly and eternal. As mankind are in a state of apostacy from God, so they are prone to idolize the good things of this life, by making temporal pleasures their chief joy. On the other hand, some of a melancholy turn of mind, have turned away from the sweets of social circles, have sought solitary retreats, and shut themselves up in cells, to live a secluded and monastick life. Notwithstanding it is true, the Lord has given man the world to be used, though not to be abused. Earthly enjoyments should not be viewed with indifference, for they demand gratitude and thankfulness. It is only by comparison, or by contrasting them with the glorious and eternal blessings of the gospel, that they are to be considered as vanity, and to sink into nothing. All the blessings of this life are worthy of some attention; and, says Solomon, “*Money answereth all things.*”

The experience of every one, as well as the general tenour of scripture, evinces that the word *all*, is not used in this place in its universal and unlimited import. Money will not answer all things, in every respect that might be mentioned; still, in a certain sense, it is true that it does or would answer all things. It answers for all the purposes

for which it is designed. There is a value attached to it which renders it useful; and for which it is desirable to be obtained. No doubt the true import of the words of the text is this: Money will answer all things as it respects the purposes of commerce. To illustrate this idea, I shall undertake to show the value and use of money, by noticing some desirable purposes which it answers.

1st. *The necessities of life.*

In the present state, we have animal frames, dependant on food and raiment for sustenance. Although mankind are directed to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, still it is essential to human existence, that the body be fed and clothed. That bread of life which cometh down from heaven, is indeed infinitely more valuable for the soul than earthly bread is for the body; but this truth does not in the least invalidate the fact, that without provision for eating and drinking, death would be the inevitable consequence. And no case perhaps can be mentioned, where food and raiment could not be obtained from any one for money, unless in a time of siege or necessity, when individuals would only have a bare pittance, merely sufficient to prevent final starvation. As it is important, that life should be prolonged, so is it equally necessary, that the means of subsistence be procured. But money is the most convenient, advantageous, and effectual for this. Other things might be mentioned as the necessities of life, and they might be obtained by various means of commerce; yet certainly money will have the pre-eminence as the best circulating medium.

2dly. *The varied comforts of life.*

The privileges and enjoyments of this world are many and greatly diversified. And though they be not essential to mere subsistence, still they are desirable and worthy of some degree of attention. It is not only commendable to seek for food, but for that which is wholesome and agreeable; and

to procure that raiment which is decent. To eat and drink of the bounties of Providence, those things that are palatable, is no sin; for they are the gifts of God to be used with delight, and to be received as favours bestowed by an invisible hand. To be clothed in a manner suitable to the age and society in which we live, is becoming; and they who are prosperous, may dress genteelly without being censured. A small tight hut might shelter from the inclemencies of the weather; but money gives an ability to erect a building more for taste, convenience, and enjoyment. Many men are able to perform journeys on foot; and others are obliged to prosecute them with an inferiour beast, and an inconvenient carriage. But who would not wish to travel, whether for business or pleasure, with excellent equipage, that he may journey with ease, and appear with respectability?

Money furnishes the most ready and desirable means of conveyance, whether by water or land; gives a person the power of visiting cities and countries, museums and monuments, and other interesting works, both of nature and of art. It was money which enabled Solomon to make great works, to build houses, to plant vineyards, to make gardens and orchards, to plant trees in them of all kinds of fruits, and to have many other of the conveniences and delights of life. It is true, the poor have no right to complain or to murmur against the providence of God, but they should be grateful for the favours they enjoy, and thus be content with their situation. For them to be uneasy, dissatisfied, and restless, is a sin. Notwithstanding the wealthy have superiour advantages, and, as they are bound to be more thankful, this shows that their situation is more eligible. And although none may envy those whose circumstances in life are far more agreeable and honourable than theirs, still they are encouraged to use all prudent and lawful means, that they may possess and enjoy

the varied earthly comforts, even in abundance. The conveniences, privileges, and enjoyments in our present state, are innumerable; hence we may see, how valuable and useful is money; for it brings them all within our reach, and exalts our station in life.

3dly. *Let us notice its commercial utility.*

Money enables those who have it, to buy and sell to advantage, and to increase their property by improving times and opportunities. The trite expression, that money begets money, has much truth in it, and might be illustrated in various ways. The interest which the principal commands to those who have considerable sums, yields them a comfortable support. Almost every thing in the commercial or bartering world, may be obtained for it at a lower rate than can be done for other commodities. A man may be a speculator, and yet be an honest man; or be free from the charge of grinding the face of the poor. He may purchase the property of his neighbour at a fair price, when it is low, and do him a kindness. If it afterwards rise in value, he may dispose of it at an advanced price, without injuring any one, although his money has given him an important advantage. How often do many men feel themselves straitened in their circumstances, and unable to prosecute their business advantageously, for the want of the valuable, convenient, circulating medium. How desirable, then, to have some in possession, or at command.

4thly. *Money gives an ability to prosecute studies, so as to acquire a liberal education.*

To a person having a taste for improvement, it would be very gratifying to have the ability to purchase a variety of interesting books, so as to have an extensive library. To be able to obtain a good education, or to be well versed in the several branches of useful literature, is an object of importance to every one. But many, in many parts

of our highly favoured land, are denied this for the want of money. How must the heart of every parent, who feels interested for the respectability and welfare of his children, glow with a laudable desire to see them well instructed in the useful and polite arts and sciences. But money can send youth to a good school, an excellent academy, or to a celebrated college, if expedient. To be well educated and informed, is not a mere ornamental accomplishment, but it is to have the mind enlarged, and to be prepared for more extensive usefulness. It is education that improves superior talents; that brightens and enlarges moderate ones. How useful then is money to furnish all the aids and opportunities of improvement!

5thly. *Money is sometimes the means of lengthening out the lives of mankind.*

This sentiment does not imply, that all the gold and silver in the world can purchase a release one hour from death, or that they can procure the gift of miraculous healings. The contrary of this is taught in the answer of Peter to Simon the sorcerer, when he said, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." Not only do some sinful courses cause many of the wicked not to live out half their days, but poverty and the want of means do shorten the lives of some.

Let two examples be mentioned. Thousands who have been verging to a fatal disease, have had the ability to journey, to experience a favourable climate, and to bring to their aid every possible remedy, which have been the means of restoring their health, and adding years to their days. But thousands of others in the same circumstances of declining health, have been unable to enjoy similar means and advantages; and they soon are brought to a sick and dying bed.

Again, thousands have been attacked with some threatening, fatal, local complaint; but their ability

procured speedy and the most skilful medical aid, and their lives have been prolonged. Thousands of others, alike afflicted, have been unable to obtain the most eminent and skilful physicians, and have fallen a ready prey to their raging disease. How valuable and useful, then, is money!

And the scriptures do not teach that money, but that *the love of money*, is the root of all evil. A covetous desire of getting, and an avaricious disposition of hoarding up earthly treasures, are the sole ground of any inconvenience or injury. We are taught, "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." But this expression teaches the wrong pursuit and condemns the abuse of the manifold blessings of life. An anxiety merely to be rich, manifests a sordid disposition, and discovers a wicked heart. To be influenced by such a spirit, in accumulating property, is base and criminal. Certainly every one would wish to be in comfortable circumstances; and to be rich, is no sin. Riches may be abused, or they may be sought unlawfully. But as money answers all things, as it respects the purposes of commerce and the conveniences of life, so in some instances it is the means or occasion of lengthening out life.

6thly. *Money enables mankind to assist the poor and relieve the distressed.*

This particular certainly is not a trifling consideration to a person of a generous and humane disposition. The mind that is possessed of only the common feelings of humanity, must experience agreeable sensations in relieving the distresses of mankind; and to be unable to do this for the want of money, would be painful to the same mind. Is it desirable and gratifying, now and then to give aid to our needy fellow mortals? How pleasing, and what abundant joy, then, would arise to a liberal soul, to have the power to be able always to give

some assistance or relief to a fellow sufferer, even as often as the expediency of giving might be known. The scriptures declare, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Then, not to be able to give to proper objects of charity, must be considered as an affliction, and should be numbered as one of the calamities of human life. How much a man can promote human happiness, who is both able and charitably disposed, according to the dictates of wisdom and conscience. And how have the breasts of many been pained, because their circumstances were such, that they had not money to assist the poor, nor relieve the distressed.

7thly. *Money is necessary for the support of society, and for effecting important enterprises.*

Civil institutions, that are of much importance, are attended with considerable expense. As the framing and supporting of wise and wholesome laws deeply interest any community, so money may be said to be a spring to its exertion and prosperity. The branches of social society are various, and not one of them can flourish without the means of support from persons of property. The stated preaching of the gospel, as to its influence upon society, is one of the greatest blessings with which any people was ever yet favoured. But for a divine to be skilful or eminent in his profession, he should not be perplexed with secular concerns. Then, if a people would support a minister of the gospel comfortably, they will be under the necessity of contributing liberally according to their ability. Any great undertaking of publick utility, demands large sums of money. How important are good roads, bridges, and canals! How useful and valuable, then, the means by which they are made! How have the most useful inventions and machines had their origin from some genius, stimulated by money! How important is an able attorney in a weighty and critical cause! But his best fee is money. How valuable then, how desirable!

8thly. *It is by money that the gospel and its attendant blessings are sent from Christian lands, to those that are heathen or pagan.*

Is our own land highly favoured of heaven, as it respects the means and glorious privileges of the gospel? To our forefathers, and even to other nations, are we indebted for these, as they flow to us in consequence of their exertions and expenditures. Are those nations who are yet groping in moral darkness, to enjoy the enlightening and benign influence of the gospel? The money of Christian societies is to be a means of effecting such unspeakable blessings. And must not a heart of charity or humanity grieve to have little or no part in this, for the want of ability? How desirable to serious and reflecting minds to have a dollar to spare frequently, to send a Bible, a Testament, or tract, to some destitute, poor family. When we hear of the labours and successes of domestick or foreign missionaries, do not our hearts burn to give a helping hand by our alms, as well as by our prayers? If we are unable to comprehend the extensive and blessed results of such exertions, we may see that money is calculated to answer very desirable purposes. How does it answer not only all the purposes of commerce, but what charitable and benevolent ends are promoted by this means!

INFERENCES.

1st. *This subject comes with a reproof to the idle and prodigal.*

Is any one denied the privileges and enjoyments which have been mentioned, and is he unable to bear a suitable part in the support of the various branches of society for the want of money? But why? Has idleness or prodigality rendered him unable? Then how should mortification, shame and conscience be awake in his breast. His inability is for his disgrace before men, and his guilt before God. The acquisition of earthly good things

demands seasonable attention, and forbids that time be squandered in sloth or rioting.

If a man be in a state of poverty, to whose conduct, industry, economy, and frugality, bear favourable testimony; such a one is a worthy person, and deserves not only pity, but consolation and assistance from his fellow men. But they, who by their criminal conduct, render themselves unable to bear their part in the various duties of social, civil, or religious life, do at the same time add to the number of the nuisances of the world, and to the burdens of mankind. The idle and prodigal do not only deprive themselves of the various comforts mentioned, but they heap up manifold calamities and sorrows upon others.

2dly. *Much money is converted to vile purposes.*

It is a lamentable fact that much of the gold and silver in our land, is squandered away for purposes which prove the greatest curse to individuals, and draw down the vengeance of Heaven on families, cities, and nations. Thus the Lord, instead of being honoured by the first fruits of all earthly substance, is greatly provoked, and even the most highly insulted by the manifold, accursed deeds, of which depraved man makes it the reluctant means of accomplishing.

How many young persons expend their money in pleasures, that are not innocent! A great mass of mankind lavish the earnings of their days of strength in wantonness; hence the thoughts of their families, and of old age, become their wretchedness.

How do some of the rich, instead of being proportionately charitable, oppress the poor and the needy. Their riches, which should call forth increasing acts of benevolence, beget a spirit of domination and oppression.

How many millions of money have been seven fold worse than wasted by the unhappy drunkard. He pours so many drams down his wretched body,

that they drown his soul in the whirlpools of crime and destruction. His children, instead of being comfortably fed and clothed, are often pinched with hunger, and, tattered with rags, endure the cold. Instead of paternal affection and treatment, they receive more than savage inhumanity, and are accustomed to hear from a father the growl of a tiger. And alas! what must be the fate of their dear mother! what the doom of a drunkard's wife? Who can describe it? Who would wish to have the deplorable tale grate on their ears.

Need I mention the money expended in deeds of darkness by human beings. Alas! their pollutions and enormities, and the base prostitutions of their earthly substance, need only be hinted. How destructive to both soul and body, for time and for eternity. Their hidden sins and midnight crimes would put all heaven to an overwhelming blush, at the great judgment day, were it not for the glorious majesty and holy grandeur of their incensed God.

If all the gold and silver in the world should from this time be wisely and righteously expended, how soon would the earth, now under the curse of Heaven, begin to assume the appearance of the garden of the Lord! How would navigation be greatly encouraged, agriculture every where improved, and all our villages and cities regulated and beautified! Both the roads and fields would present a new and enlivening aspect. We should have no distressed poor, and all our sons and daughters would enjoy the rich blessings of a good education. The gospel would be sent to the destitute and perishing; and the enlightening beams of science would penetrate the dark shades of intellectual ignorance, and the gloomy retreats of moral superstitions, and human desolations. The captive Jews would be restored, and Africa's enslaved sons made free. The expenditures of earthly riches, or temporal goods, are to be the great means of renovating both the natural and moral world.

Reader, or hearer, may you and I then devote our substance in that manner, which will promote the greatest general good ; for every human being must give an account to God, whether he expends his money for the valuable purposes for which it was designed, or for his everlasting shame.

3dly. *True religion is incomparably excellent.*

This is what will answer and effect that which money was never designed to do. This is calculated to give true submission and contentment in a state of affliction and poverty ; and thus render the poor man happy, and in a certain sense, rich. This gives peace to a troubled conscience, is a balm for a broken and contrite heart, and enables the soul to sing the triumphant song of victory, in the solemn hour of death. This is indeed wisdom and excellence, which avails in time and flourishes in eternity. Says Solomon, “ *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver; and the gain thereof, than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand, riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness; and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and happy is every one that retaineth her.*” How excellent and essential, then, this heavenly treasure, these durable riches, which will avail when time shall be no longer; and crown the soul with glorious immortality.

4thly. *Men may be afflicted for the loss of property.*

Sometimes by fire, or at sea, or by the knavery of a neighbour, a man is at once stripped of a fortune, and deprived of all his earthly substance. But such losses are real calamities, and are reasons why we should be afflicted in some measure. If we are not to be insensible to the advantages of property, surely, it is a disadvantage, a natural evil, when we are suddenly deprived of an earthly treasure.

5thly. *To be destitute of a heavenly treasure, demands that we should be much more grievously afflicted.*

If property has some value, the pearl of great price is infinitely more valuable. But it may be lost. How solemn and striking the inquiry of the Saviour! “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” It is answered in the Psalms: “That the redemption of the soul ceaseth forever.” Surely, then, there is abundant reason for impenitent sinners, for all who have not believed to the saving of their souls, to be afflicted and mourn in the anguish of their spirit.

6thly. *Then let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. “Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”*

But to do this, we must neglect neither temporal nor eternal concerns. We must let the things of time have their proper place; and those of eternity, their due weight. A man who has consistent views, and who is under the influence of a Christian spirit, will have a suitable regard for earthly concerns and enjoyments, and will not be slothful in business; while he is fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. What an unspeakable privilege that we may be grateful for all the endearments of life, and, at the same time, have our affections on things above, and be laying up a glorious treasure for eternity. How happy must that man be, whose conduct is consistent in the things of this world and in those of religion. Such was the character of Daniel—A man of business, but a most humble, devoted servant of God. May industry and economy, liberality and charity, be our happy lot in time. May we be the servants of Christ, by seeking to obey all the commands of our heavenly Father, and at last hear the blessed plaudit, “Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.”

SERMON XII.

THE DEMORALIZING INFLUENCE OF BAD EXAMPLES.

I. CORINTHIANS XV. 33.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

As mankind are formed for society, so constant intercourse is necessary for the sake of convenience, and the great good of the community. Hence, by various methods, and in every period of their lives, they exert a mutual influence, either favourable or unfavourable. The rich and poor, the bond and free, the sage and the little child, are all subject to the control of the perpetual interchange of human deportment.

This world is a vast stage of publick scenery, on which is continually exhibited and beheld, every possible diversity of moral actions. And the conduct of mankind has had an effect upon each other so powerful, that, for ages, it has stood as a maxim, that men are governed more by example than by precept. Yes; so great is its force, that it is morally impossible for them not to be influenced by the manners of those around them. The young exert a mutual and effectual agency over their associates, to pursue the same courses, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. And they who are more advanced in years, do very powerfully affect, not only those who are of the same age, and of similar standing in society; but they have also an irresistible influence, either salutary or baneful upon the younger class of the community, and over those whose advantages are comparatively small.

Says Solomon, "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Hence the actions of both the righteous and the wicked have an efficient, though contrary tendency; the one moral and saving; the other immoral and destructive. The degrees of their influence are indeed vastly different, as their stations in life are greatly varied. Moreover, some of the people of God are more faithful than others in the discharge of the various duties incumbent upon them; and some of the impenitent do sin with a higher hand and more outstretched arm than others.

David exclaims, "Blessed is the man, that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." This declaration not only shows the wisdom of shunning the designs, the ways, and places of the immoral and irreligious; but it also implicitly avows a curse to be entailed upon those who associate with wicked and profligate companions.

Says the apostle Paul, in the words of the text, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." By this assertion we are taught, that *all expressions of evil are of a pernicious tendency*. And we cannot turn our eyes nor our thoughts to the moral condition of the community, or to the conduct of individuals, without witnessing some manner of communications that are either good or bad. The conduct of every member of our families, of friends and enemies, of professors of religion and non-professors, of ministers and magistrates, of our superiors and inferiors, does all combine in a greater or less degree to form our present moral characters, and consequently to raise the hand *to vote* for our future, eternal destiny.

Whenever the *words*, the *deeds*, or the *looks* of any person, are wrong, that soul is guilty of an evil communication. An *act* is exhibited to his fellow-

men to tempt them to commit sin. The tongue especially is employed by some as an instrument to communicate all manner of evil thoughts and wicked designs. And mankind may not only show forth evil by positive acts; but they may, on various occasions, equally express evil, by the *refraining from action*. In many instances, their silence, their refusing to act, and to manifest their decided disapprobation of an evil deed, or of some destructive way, gives countenance to sin, and emboldens the transgressor.

As example has a powerful sway to draw votaries and followers; so daily observation attests, that evil communications are pernicious in their demoralizing influence on the hearts and lives of men. Hence all those are in dangerous circumstances, who do not avoid vain and vicious company; for they may insensibly, yes, before they are aware, they may be seduced into some evil course. And do any trust to the goodness or stability of their hearts? or do they confide in their present aversion to profligate manners? Alas! how many have thus deceived and destroyed themselves. They have ventured, from time to time, to frequent the circles of those who were bent on mischief, and every manner of evil, till they could countenance their wickedness; and at last eagerly engage in those pursuits, at which they once shuddered. Few have the fortitude to resist the temptations, which are presented in various forms, by intriguing and licentious men. Thousands and thousands, have been fatally seduced and ruined by the force of evil communications; and the same ruinous consequences attend the conversation and society of immoral persons. They are zealous to increase their numbers; they delight to draw others into their sinful and soul destroying courses; therefore, the wise will turn from the company, and the places of resort of such persons.

All evil communications may very properly be

considered as different forms of *temptation*; for they are calculated to allure and draw others into evil. The nature and tendency of expressions of evil consist in some *exhibition to tempt to sin*. That they are contagious and highly dangerous, appears from the command, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." How presumptuous, then, for any to rush into the midst of temptations, and wilfully expose themselves to destruction! The words of those who draw others into sin and disgrace, may be smoother than oil; for they do often persuade their deluded companions, that they are highly friendly to them. But alas, what *friends!* and what kind of *friendship*, is that which is plotting the *present and future ruin* of both soul and body!

In connexion with the declaration of the text, the apostle gives us a salutary caution: "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners." As if he had said, you are admonished to beware, to take heed to yourselves; for all expressions of evil are exceeding dangerous morals. Deceive not yourselves with the false notion that you are not *in danger* of being enticed from the right way, and led into the paths of vice and folly, from the corrupting examples of immoral and wicked men; for they are hidden and fatal snares to the soul. Hence the exhortation of Solomon: "Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding." The direction of the apostle Paul to Timothy is, "To shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their words will eat as doth a canker."

God's chosen people, Israel, enjoyed peculiar privileges; but they were frequently ensnared and drawn into sin by their idolatrous neighbours. The wicked examples of adjoining nations were so dangerous to the Israelites, that they were forbidden to form any intimate connexions with them.

Jehu was led away and corrupted by the abominable example of Jeroboam, whose evil communications influenced Israel to all manner of wickedness. How simple and melancholy the account.

"Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them." Manasseh was the principal in seducing and leading Judah into great sins. "And the Lord spake by his servants, the prophets, saying, Manasseh, king of Judah, hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols." Thus two nations, or the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, were corrupted principally by the evil communications of two men, Jeroboam and Manasseh.

The present subject may be farther illustrated, from *God's treatment of his ancient Israel*, whom he set apart for himself. The Lord did much to separate them from all other nations; lest they should be influenced by their evil communications to neglect his service, and to join in idolatrous worship. He forbade their making any covenant, or any marriages with them. His language to his people, concerning the nations around them, is, "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee. Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. If ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them; they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your

sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them, then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the land which he hath given unto you." These scriptural declarations teach us the dangerous and destructive influence of evil examples; and it appears evident from the divine procedure in relation to his peculiar people, that evil communications are highly pernicious.

Suffer me to mention some *particular sins*, that corrupt the good manners, and destroy the souls of multitudes.

The sin of *profanity* is not only detestable in itself, and without the least shadow of temptation for an excuse; but it spreads with a deadly blast, by causing others to join in its polluting and despicable imprecations. The tongue of a profane person is indeed *a destructive fire, a world of iniquity*. A profane swearer is not only guilty of committing very heinous sins by his own horrid oaths, but he has the additional guilt of exciting others to bid defiance to every thing that is solemn or sacred. Awfully dangerous are the communications of the wretch who dares daily and hourly take the name of God in vain; for he introduces his foul and degrading expressions into families and societies, and these tend to lead the ignorant and vain into the same shameful and ruinous vice. How lamentable to see young persons of good morals drawn away by one of their number, or by one of riper age, into this heaven-daring sin; for they spread the dreadful infection, till society is disgraced by their numbers and scandalous wickedness.

Sabbath breaking is another sin of which some are guilty, by influencing others to join in their

evil practices. Although the Lord demands one day in seven to be kept as an holy Sabbath to himself; and although he requires both man and beast to rest on that day, and forbids those employments and recreations, which are lawful on other days; yet how frequently do we see the Lord's day openly profaned. And some persons are doubly guilty for its profanation. They not only work themselves, but they employ others in their labours; and deny their beasts their day of rest. Some make it a day of merriment, and entice their companions to loiter with them, and join in their indiscreet gaiety. In divers manners, by their evil communications they solicit their fellows to become partakers of their unhallowed doings. Men are not content to break the Sabbath by the omission of those duties which God has enjoined, but many of them exhibit corrupting examples, by which multitudes are inclined to join in their evil practices, and most effectually put themselves beyond the reach of all the means of grace.

Intemperance is a sin which has corrupted the good manners of legions. The intemperate do not generally retire to some hidden corner, that they may not be seen of men to degrade themselves; but they seek companions to share in their intoxicating repast. Persons of this character seem to be uneasy, when they indulge their vitiated and craving appetites in secret; hence they unite in clubs, that they may emulate each other to sin with greediness. They use many fair speeches to allure others to become partakers of their evil deeds, and thus to join with them in greatly debasing themselves. Doubtless the greater part of those who are now addicted to sottish drunkenness, were induced to this shameful and ruinous practice by the allurements of others. Step by step they are drawn by the company of vulgar or polite drunkards, till they readily comply with

any temptation to excessive indulgence, which is presented. How many of the youth and middle aged, who were once the ornaments of society, have been ensnared by the evil communications of others, to that course and condition which they once viewed as the most detestable. They were excited by degrees to drink ardent spirits; and shortly, they themselves use a powerful, though baneful influence, to induce others to do as foolishly and as criminally as they have done. Very frequently has one person, given to intoxication, drawn a rabble around him, to become the nuisances of society, and the mortification of numerous friends and relatives.

Let us hearken to the solemn interrogations, declarations, and cautions of the wise man, concerning whom a wo is denounced. "Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright: At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." And may I not now ask, What man not devoid of sense, will not shun the *man*, the *places*, and all the *temptations* of intemperance?

Let us see now what is said concerning those who are *accessary* to the common but destructive vice of intoxication. The prophet Habakkuk lifts up his warning voice against the man who is the miserable agent of another's drunkenness, in the following language: "Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth the bottle to him, and makest him drunken also. Thou art filled with shame for glory." O how unfeeling and unprincipled, then, must be some of our tavern keepers and grocers, who, for the sake of two or three cents, will furnish a drunken man with

poisonous, furious liquor, when they are conscious their additional dram will make its victim swagger home to terrify his children, abuse his wife, and act the visible fiend to every person before or around him. And have not many of our merchants been shamefully guilty for handing the filled glass or bottle to persons whom they knew were given to intemperance ? Yes, and how often have professed christians encouraged the same appalling traffick ! The father has furnished the son with the destroying liquid, as though he could not be a man, till he would at times be made to stagger, instead of walking erect. To complete the melancholy scene, we see the son make his father drink, till he becomes a drunkard.

INFERENCES.

1st. *It must be very improper for the community to increase the power and influence of men of bad example.*

Persons of profligate manners in a private capacity, will not be likely to forsake their immoral courses, should they be promoted to some high station or important office in society. If their communications are evil and dangerous, when their sphere of action is comparatively small, only let it be enlarged, and they will countenance and introduce all manner of iniquitous customs. How inconsistent for any to suppose, that rulers or officers of the state or nation, will encourage the regular observance of the Sabbath, when they previously disregard God's holy day, and treat with contempt the worshipping assemblies of his saints ! How unreasonable to imagine that rulers will have a tender concern for the honour of God's blessed name, when by them it is daily taken in vain and blasphemed ! And surely we need not expect, that any legislative or executive power will use suitable exertions for the suppression of the degrading and ruinous sin of drunkenness, when they themselves

frequently countenance a rabble in their intoxication, by partaking of their cup. Powerful and immoral men can send forth a deadly pestilence on their votaries ; and so far as their influence is increased, so far they have extended opportunities to corrupt the community by their manifold, evil communications.

2dly. *Evil and pernicious sentiments ought not to be viewed with an eye of indifference.*

Men of corrupt principles do not keep their licentious opinions a secret in their own breasts ; but they flow from their polluted tongues with infectious streams in various directions. If a man cherish all manner of evil thoughts, his conversation will not be free from alluring and dangerous expressions. If his reasonings be corrupt, his words and actions will be evil communications. Some persons say, They care not what a man believes, or what sentiments he embraces, if he only lead a moral life. They would insinuate, that there is no danger from evil or corrupt sentiments. But is it an easy thing in this world of frequent, social intercourse, for men of profligate views not to spread the infection of their corrupt opinions ? Do men of immoral principles strictly conform to the gospel rules of morality ? Both the word of God and matters of fact serve to teach us, that evil sentiments are of a demoralizing tendency, that they are the fountain of all evil communications which corrupt the morals of individuals and the community.

3dly. *How great the guilt of those who draw others into sin !*

One sinner destroyeth much good ; for he not only deprives himself of the eternal joys of heaven, and plunges his own soul into the pit of wo by his sinful courses ; but he leads others also in the road to ruin. One sinner, one bold transgressor, if he be a man of power and influence, may allure a multitude to walk in his footsteps in every evil

and pernicious way, and thus be the wretched instrument of ruining their souls for ever. How great must be the guilt of parents, whose profligate manners have an influence upon their children so powerful, as to cause them to follow their iniquities from the third to the fourth generation. In civil cases leaders of a mob or rabble are viewed as doubly guilty. The corrupt examples and pernicious influence of immoral persons may spread from one and another of their associates to different clubs and distant societies, and the effects may be dreadful to many of succeeding ages.

4thly. *How important for each one to take heed to his ways.*

In every company and on every occasion we exhibit a good or a bad example. And who can tell what great and lasting effects may result from his daily deportment. So nearly are the concerns of this world and the future connected, that the transactions of our lives will not only affect us, and those around us, in time, but in eternity; and if our communications be corrupt, they may extend through various channels to different communities, and to the great detriment of future generations. Shortly many of our fellow mortals will have run their race, take their exit into the invisible state, and be awarded according to their works in consequence of our doings, or of the influence we shall have exerted. Possibly our state of probation is the most solemn and important period of existence, which can be found amongst all the creatures within the dominions of Jehovah. Connected as we are with our fellow beings and with eternity, every action and every circumstance of our moral character, although apparently indifferent, may be filled with consequences beyond our comprehension.

How important for professed christians ever to remember, that the vows of God are upon them, and that they neither give licence to their words

nor their actions, so as to wound the cause of the Redeemer. Children and youth should guard their tongues, and take heed to their ways, lest they incite and encourage others in the paths of folly and vice. The eye of God is not only upon the sons of men to behold all their doings, but the eyes of some of our fellow mortals do almost constantly notice our examples.

5thly. *Men of power and trust are highly responsible for the use they make of their influence.*

To whom much is given, of them will much be required. Rulers must give an account to the supreme Judge, whether they enact laws to be a terror to evil doers; and the executive authority will be amenable at the final tribunal, if they bear the sword in vain. Great men have many and extensive opportunities of doing good both for the state and church, by their good examples and wise administrations. They should stand as barriers to lay restraints upon vice, and prevent the increasing immoralities and iniquities of the land.

Patriotism and benevolence cry, O ye rulers of our nation, use all wise means, faithful exertions, and persevering endeavours, to prevent the growing evils, the heaven daring sins of our dear country, thereby good shall come to thee and thy people. Philanthropy exclaims, Ye defenders of the rights of a free people, employ your tongues and pens, your wealth and influence, that the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, and that the fear of God may be before their eyes. But if men in authority do not exert their ability to check growing vices and prevent wickedness, they become partakers of other men's sins. And how degrading and criminal for any in exalted stations to encourage and follow the multitude to do evil.

6thly. *How important for all the friends of the community and Zion to unite their influence and exertions to arrest the abounding iniquities of the land.*

Surely this is an object of vast importance and truly desirable; therefore it is worthy the attention and unwearied pursuit of every wise and good man. The end is a great and glorious one; let the means be wise and the efforts proceed from benevolent motives; then may we rest the cause with God, and trust in him for his blessing. The present good to individuals and the nation, and the extensive and lasting happy consequences, which may descend to posterity, are urgent calls for the check of immorality in the present age, and for the abounding of christian virtue. If evil examples have a wide spread and lasting influence, then how noble, how glorious, by wise and benevolent exertions, to counteract them, and by good examples to transmit unspeakable blessings to the latest posterity! Little do we know what happy, what extensive, and what durable effects, may result to the world, by the united and persevering endeavours of the philanthropist and christian.

Let the friends of morality and religion as an affectionate band of brethren, emulate each other to every good work, and whilst they are thus engaged in promoting the cause of virtue and of God, they will prove a mighty phalanx to oppose all manner of vice and ungodliness. And as good men are entitled to their encouragement and support, so a wicked man is conscious that he is unworthy of promotion, and ought not to be exalted to exert a more baneful sway to blight the vital interests of the community.

At the last great day, it will doubtless be manifest, that some persons, by their individual and combined efforts of godly and persevering exertions, were the happy instruments of preserving the good manners of multitudes, and of the conversion and salvation of thousands of their fellow men. O; what seals to the purity of their zeal, and to their lives of faithfulness! What sure pledges of a glorious and an eternal inheritance!

What precious gems, bespangled in their crown of glory, shining with a brilliant and immortal lustre! Who would not rejoice to be partakers of their recompence of reward! But the present is the precious seed time to prepare for such a blessed harvest in life everlasting.

On the other hand, there may be individuals in our world, who are raised so high in power, and whose influence is so extensive and demoralizing as to corrupt the morals of millions of human beings, and to be accessory to their destruction, both for time and eternity. But what reproaches do they heap up for themselves during the revolutions of interminable ages! what miseries to exasperate their souls in the regions of despair! From thousands of tongues of undone wretches, will the dreadful effects of the turpitude and enormity of their crimes eternally resound in their ears.

Reader or hearer, suppose you should reflect for a moment concerning your numerous relatives. Which of you can say, that not one of these has ever been to you, or to any of your friends, the occasion of mortification and anguish, by falling a victim to the besom of intemperance? Have you never seen any of your fellow-mortals ensnared by the examples of vicious companions, and allured by their evil communications into some shameful and ruinous vice? How then should your bosoms enkindle with tender emotions, and a noble solicitude to give efficiency to every beneficent plan and effort to reclaim the wandering, to establish the just, and to save the souls of men!

SERMON XIII.

THE DUTY AND WISDOM OF CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

MARK XIII. 37.

What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.

THE divine Redeemer is, in this chapter, foretelling the awful destruction, which was about to come upon Jerusalem. Having forewarned his disciples of the evils which they would be called to endure, he cautioned them to act in view of the impending desolations. The remarks generally have a primary reference to the dreadful calamities which would shortly befall the Jews; but there are several expressions that may be happily applied to the term of any man's life, or to the period of the great judgement day. Those preceding the words of the text, are of that nature.

The Saviour assures his followers, that the things which he had predicted, would take place, in the following language: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." He then adds, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work; and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at cock crow-

ing, or in the morning. Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch.*"

The term watch, may designate various ideas, according to the occasion of the use of the word. To watch may imply the same as to keep awake, to notice, to oversee, to tend, to take heed, to defend, to keep careful guard, so as not to receive hurt, or to look for a thing with earnest desire.

This caution may be considered as a friendly warning to apprise us, that we are in an enemies land, and in danger. If one man should exhort another to be on his guard, he would convey the idea of his being exposed to receive damage from some other person. Hence, he should examine his affairs, and beware; for he is reminded, that he is liable to sustain a loss. And when mankind are directed to watch, and to take heed to their ways, they may conclude, that some enemy is at hand, that would gladly do them hurt.

The blessed Saviour, in exhorting all men to watch, inculcates the duty of their awaking unto righteousness, and of giving all diligence in relation to their spiritual concerns. It is a lamentable circumstance, that mankind are naturally slothful, inactive, and stupid, as to those duties and exertions which are essential to their dearest, their immortal interest. Hence they are commanded to awake, to watch against temptation, and every vain thing that exalteth itself against the truth.

But, if any would be spiritually awake, they must look well to their *own hearts*, and take heed, that no enemy be harboured there. This is a duty of primary importance; and the first requisite to obedience, the first step in the way of wisdom. Mankind may have numerous foes around them, yet their evil designs may be defeated, unless they have some enemy secretly lurking in their own breasts. When an army inadvertently harbours one of the enemy in its *own camp*, how dangerous

its situation. So, if men have enemies concealed in their own bosoms, they will prove very treacherous indeed, spies with more than deadly weapons. Let every soul then inquire, Is it I, who am secreting an Achan in my tent ?

1st. *Frequent examination, respecting our conduct towards our Maker, is implied in this command of the Saviour.*

As mankind are prone to forget God, and neglect his worship, so they should be very jealous of themselves, and watchful over their conduct, as it respects the various duties which they owe to him. If they be remiss in this particular part of duty, they will be found deficient in all. Shall the Lord daily watch over his intelligent, apostate creatures of this lower world, for good ? and shall not they give all diligence, to regard him in all their ways ? They have reason to be very watchful, lest they be ungrateful toward their great and most bounteous Benefactor, and neglect to call on his name.

The eye of God is constantly noticing all the ways of mankind, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. How important then for them to watch unto prayer, that they do not wander from him, and do some great wickedness in his sight. And as the Lord is supremely great and good, so he is worthy to be loved with supreme affection, and served by all the powers of every soul. Hence man's highest concern, and chief study, should be, to devote his life to the honour of his great name.

2dly. *To watch does also imply frequent examination of our conduct towards our fellow men.*

The first table of the law points out our duty towards God ; and the second, our duty towards our neighbour. But what is a general and unerring rule to guide our motives and actions ? One is briefly summed up in these words : " As ye have opportunity, do good unto all men, especially unto the household of faith." Then we are not only forbidden to do wrong to any, but it is also enjoined

upon us to be serviceable to our fellow mortals ; hence we may see the necessity of our constantly watching the various springs of action in our own conduct towards each other.

Christian duty is not only of a negative, but also of a positive character. If a man's life be not beneficial , as well as free from the epithet, injurious, God will treat him as an unprofitable servant. Mankind must not only watch against an envious and revengeful spirit ; but they must see also, that they possess a benevolent and forgiving temper. And as they are not to speak evil of each other, so *they* will be inexcusable, who do not pray one for another. Man's true interest, his dearest welfare, for time and for eternity, is to be constantly kept in view. How careful then should every soul of us be to keep a strict watch, lest we neglect many precious opportunities of doing good.

3dly. *The several members of every family should take heed, that no iniquity be harboured there.*

The individuals of a household are peculiarly concerned in the term, " Watch," for very important and affectionate duties are incumbent upon them. Their intercourse is so mutual ; they are so continually intermingled by diversity of deportment, that the various members are constantly setting an agreeable and good example, or one disagreeable and bad. Great good may be the effect of a careful and upright walk ; and great evil may ensue in consequence of heedlessness and misconduct.

Parents are mutually to assist each other by a sympathetick and faithful watch, that their lives may be pleasant through this vale of tears, and their souls at last united with saints in glory. They are bound to watch over their offspring for good, and to instruct them in the ways of wisdom. Children should take heed to their ways, and obey their parents in the Lord. Brethren, and sisters, with mutual affection and faithfulness, should not only seek each others present, but future well being.

Masters must be kind and faithful to their servants, knowing that they also have a Master in heaven. Servants should yield obedience to their masters, in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord ; “ Not with eye-service, as men pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” Happy indeed, is that family, whose members watch against every root of bitterness, springing up among them ; and who sanctify the Lord God in their hearts.

4thly. *The command, to watch, implies, that mankind should eye the enemy at a distance, that they may the more easily defeat any evil design.*

To encourage temptation, is the beginning to sin. Immediately to resist, is both the path of duty and the path of safety. They who cheerfully and wisely comply with the exhortation of the Saviour, will watch against the very appearance of evil, lest they be overtaken by some fault. Any enticing or dangerous way will be shunned, even at the suspicion of stratagem. The wise will not wait to be entangled in hurtful snares, before they take heed ; but they will carefully guard all the avenues of the soul, lest they be assaulted unawares. They will be prudent in the selection of their places of resort ; and of companions with whom to associate. As wise generals look well to the ground and situation of their encampment, and then have sentinels placed at certain posts to watch or observe the approach or movings of the enemy, that they may not receive damage by surprise, so in spiritual concerns wisdom directs to cautious steps.

5thly. *The direction of the Saviour, to watch, implies much attention to the word of God and prayer.*

Divine revelation is so important for instruction, that to watch in the best manner, men must frequently search the scriptures. They abound with such lessons of heavenly wisdom, as will lead the faithful to a knowledge of all truth necessary to watch aright. And the reading of God’s holy word,

devout meditation, and prayer, should not be put asunder. The expression of the apostle Paul, in relation to this interesting subject, is, "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication." Humble and fervent prayer has a tendency to keep the enemy at a distance, or to prevent injury from his unsuspected assault. And if any would be fortified against evil, from his malignant attacks, they must frequently and cordially engage in these duties. By so doing, they will grow strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. And as the habit of watching requires strength, so the obstacles in the way of the christian soldier are gradually removed, or else the difficulties the more easily overcome.

6thly. *To watch, implies daily preparation for Christ's coming.*

The Saviour is characterized by a nobleman, or by a man taking a far journey, and delivering unto his servants his goods, that they may occupy, till he come. And whether men have ten, or five, or one talent, intrusted to them, they are faithfully and wisely to improve them, till his return. Concerning the wise virgins, it is said, they had oil in their lamps. That is, they had the christian graces vigilantly exercised—they were awake unto divine things—they kept a faithful watch—and when the bridegroom came, they were ready to go out, and meet him. But the foolish neglected to watch; they slept without oil in their lamps, and how great was their confusion, when the bridegroom came.

The compassionate Redeemer does most plainly show the urgent importance, of making immediate preparation, and waiting daily for his appearing; because we know not in what hour our Lord will come. But of this we are assured, that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." What manner of persons, then, ought ye to be in

all holy conversation and godliness; “ Looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.”

Having pointed out some particular things implied in the command of Christ, I would remark, it is necessary thus to watch, otherwise *we must dwell in great darkness*. Light is sown for the upright in heart, or for them that take heed to their ways by careful and persevering watching. Although darkness may endure for a night, yet joy cometh as in the morning to those who look with earnest desire for the sanctifying visitations of their God and Saviour.

The impenitent and unbelieving, in a spiritual view, are said to live in darkness, and to see no light. But why? Because they do not watch unto prayer; they are not awake unto righteousness.

Concerning the righteous, sometimes the candle of the Lord shines clearly around them; and at other times, they mourn in darkness. When they are not weary in well doing, or when they keep awake, solicitous for the prosperity of Zion, their path is filled with light. But when they grope in thorny mazes, when they sorrow in the bitterness of their souls, what causes their way to be grievous? Their humble confessions declare, They have not kept a vigilant and constant guard so as not to receive hurt; or they have been sluggish and neglected to watch. They acknowledge that, at a certain time, they were not spiritually awake; were not faithful soldiers for their Lord and Master. They confess, they suffered some enemy to enter the walls and encourage desertion in the camp of their King, though in direct opposition to his express orders. For their unfaithfulness they are grieved and abased; and in view of their treacherous doings, the face of the Lord is hid, which is to their souls as the judgement of Egyptian darkness.

2dly. *It is incumbent on all to watch, to prevent their falling into grievous sins.*

In this world of sin and sorrow, there are many allurements to evil courses; and they who neglect to watch, are liable to be overcome by temptations, and to fall into many hurtful snares. He that trusts in his own heart, and scorns to take heed to his ways, is exposed to the commission of aggravated crimes. Hazael disdained the idea of keeping a careful watch over the secret workings of his own breast; but he committed iniquities of the most unnatural and detestable wickedness. They who are not jealous over themselves, ere they are aware, may be led into some unexpected, heinous sin.

Even the people of God must maintain a constant and prayerful watch, lest they dishonour his great name, and bring a reproach upon the blessed cause which they have espoused. Need I mention the misdeeds of Noah, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon, Jonah and Peter. One circumstance respecting their transgressions should be noticed. They unawares committed sins whose nature was the contrast of their peculiar character. Thus the preacher of righteousness, and a man of the greatest sobriety, in an unguarded hour, is overtaken in the fault of intoxication. The meekest of men, forgetting himself, in the pride of his heart, speaks with arrogance and acts presumptuously. The priest of the most high God, losing sight of his station and sacred office, listens to the persuasions of those who were encouraging idolatry. The man devoted to the divine service, neglects prayer, and then commits a shameful crime, to cover which he would take his neighbour's life. The prophet of the Lord, sent on an important errand, attempted to hide from his Maker. The intrepid and zealous follower of the Lord Jesus, becomes timid, and then denies his Master's cause. Let every soul of us, then, ever remember this command of Christ, and watch, lest we also be led to commit some great wickedness.

3dly. *It is important to yield obedience to prevent others from falling into sin and utter ruin.*

All grant, that they who are called to preach the gospel, are bound to watch for souls, as those that must give an account. But is there not a great responsibility for parents to watch over their children for their future well being ; and for the individuals of a family, and the members of particular societies, to seek each other's temporal, but especially their eternal welfare ?

When the professed friends of Christ do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, their conduct has an unfavourable influence upon others; but will this excuse those that make no profession of christianity ? If believers come short of their duty, and at times give offence, will their conduct avail for justification to those that violate every command of the Redeemer ? Will the Lord Jesus justify any for not being his friends, and professing friendship to him ? Will they be accounted blameless, who neglect to watch, and who attempt to excuse their disobedience by pleading the averseness of their hearts toward God, and their unwillingness to serve the blessed Redeemer ? Surely the adding of iniquity to iniquity, or the breaking of the first important command, will not lessen the guilt of violating every other. So far as any, whether the professors of religion or not, come short of christian perfection, as it respects their conduct towards God and their fellow men, so far they practically encourage others to venture to continue to walk in the road to perdition. Mankind are daily eyeing each other's conduct, and viewing one another as living in obedience, or disobedience to the commands of the Saviour. And all can see, that if we do not emulate others to walk in the pathway of life, we encourage them in the ways of death.

4thly. *The command to watch, is obligatory on all.*
Christ has expressly enjoined it. in the most em-

phatical and solemn manner. His language is universal : "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Whosoever then hears this injunction, is bound to yield obedience. Whether old or young, saint or sinner, it proclaims, "Thou art the man."

The believer in Jesus does in some measure comply with this precept ; but he is not to be slothful, and sleep now, because he has begun to walk in the path of obedience. He must be reaching forward towards that which is perfect. He is to follow the example of his divine Master, who was ever watchful and prayerful.

The impenitent are under obligations immediately to comply with this important requisition ; for a delay is both sinful and dangerous. Hence the blessed Redeemer would have all men be awake unto divine things, and not spend their probationary state in spiritual sloth and inactivity. He well knew the dangers to which they are exposed in this world of sin and temptation, and also the vast importance of their taking heed to their ways by keeping a constant and faithful watch. Let no one then attempt to excuse himself from the various and indispensable duties implied in this command of our Saviour.

REMARKS.

1st. *If we mean to obey this command, we shall let it appear in our conduct.*

If the character of obedience and faithfulness appertain to us, we shall manifest to the world, that our thoughts and affections are on heavenly and divine things. We shall guard our tongues, that they speak no guile, and employ them with manifest delight in conversing about the great and glorious things of Christ's kingdom. We shall not be content, if we merely escape the censure of immorality ; but shall seek to emulate to good work.

They that comply with the commands of the

Saviour, will be noticed. They cannot avoid manifesting, that they have been with Jesus ; for a humble and faithful walk discovers the goodly effects of God's marvellous grace and his pardoning mercy. And we must not listen to the cries of the sluggard, would we so run as to obtain the prize of the faithful, but with fervency of spirit serve the Lord.

2dly. *If any mean to despise this command of our Saviour, they will also let it appear.*

Such persons will discover by their conduct, that they in reality, have no desire to honour and obey him. Their daily deportment will bespeak the feelings of their hearts, and show to others, that they will not watch. Let men neglect the various duties which have been shown to be implied in this direction of the divine Redeemer, and they will manifest to God, to angels, and to men, that they do not mean to walk in newness of life, nor seek the salvation of their souls.

Alas, how strikingly true, that they who will not watch against temptation and sin, will watch against truth and holiness. None can be indifferent in this great and important work. They must either comply, or else rebel. They must constantly watch and pray, that their souls may live or continually resist the truth, and desire not the knowledge of wisdom's ways. The only possible way for any soul of man to prevent disobedience, is to be obedient.

3dly. *How conspicuous the justice of God in the condemnation of the finally impenitent.*

If men will not regard the command of Christ, to watch against sin, and wait for his appearing, then it will be just for him to appear to their confusion and utter dismay. The blessed Saviour has most plainly pointed out their duty ; hence they have no cloak for their sin. He has dealt faithfully, and in the most solemn and affectionate manner does he entreat them.

If any of you, my hearers, should at last go away into everlasting punishment, you will endure the just consequences of your own doings ; your end will be according to your own chosen ways. You must knowingly, and wilfully, and madly resist the light, if you yet rebel, and refuse to watch. And what plea or excuse can you make, why you should not be finally condemned ?

4thly. *Be entreated then to listen to the voice of mercy.*

How important the command of the blessed Redeemer, "Watch." How deeply interested are all ; and how unspeakably blessed those that yield obedience ! But alas ! must the Saviour point out the pathway of life, to heirs of death ; and yet they turn their backs upon his most gracious and reasonable entreaties ? Oh ! let it not be so any longer ! No ! do not yet harden yourselves against his invaluable exhortations and injunctions ; but be persuaded to be animated by the hopes of a blessed immortality. The blessed Jesus is worthy of your love, your confidence, and entire obedience, even now and forevermore. Let the merciful command of the Redeemer be remembered and obeyed, and your souls shall live : "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

SERMON XIV.

THE FEARFUL AND WONDERFUL FORMATION OF MAN.

PSALM CXXXIX. 14.

I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

THE royal psalmist assigns the sentiment contained in these words, as a reason why he should praise God. And surely the contemplation of the human frame is well calculated to excite the wonder and admiration of Man. He should be excited with rapture at the thought of an inquiry into a work so curious and astonishing. What a variety of parts are formed, and of uses designed, within the compass of a human body ! How exactly is every part adapted to its purpose, and one part adjusted to another ! And though all the parts of this complex fabrick are produced and nourished from the same earth, yet how various their texture and consistence ! How firm and solid the bones ! how soft and pliant the flesh ! how tough and flexible the muscles ! how fine and feeling the nerves ! how quick and lively the organs of sensation ! and how promptly the limbs obey the dictates of the will !

Wonderful is the structure of the vessels which receive and distribute the nutriment, convey the blood, and carry on the respiration ; and no less wonderful is the action of those vessels, in performing their respective functions. Mysterious is the power of that animal motion, on which life depends. That of the stomach, heart, and lungs, is involuntary. We can give no other account of it, than that which the Apostle Paul gives : " In God we

live, and move, and have our being." The motion of our limbs is indeed voluntary ; but this is equally mysterious. How is it that a mere act of will, contracts or extends the muscles of our bodies ? How is it that our volition should impart motion to the various members of our bodily frame, no philosopher or anatomist can explain.

Moreover the mind is as wonderful as the body. This cannot be an object of sense ; although it is an object of immediate consciousness. We perceive that there is something within us, superior to that gross matter of which the body consists. We can think, reason, and reflect ; can review and contemplate our own thoughts ; can call to remembrance things past ; can look forward and make conjectures on things to come. In our meditations we can in a moment pass to distant regions and to distant worlds, and thence return at our pleasure.

The mind is, in some inexplicable manner, so united to the body, that it receives all its information by means of the bodily organs. Besides, a disorder of the body affects and deranges the powers of the mind ; and the afflictions and sorrows of the mind, debilitate and waste the body. Hence, we know, that there is an intimate union between these constituent parts of man. This union is necessary to the present state ; but its nature, in what it consists, how it is preserved, how the soul can act in the body, and how it will receive and communicate ideas in a separate, invisible state, we cannot at present understand. That the soul can act in a state of separation, may be possible ; for we find that even now, the greater part of its exercises are, in a certain sense, independent of the bodily senses. It is indeed dependant on these for the first reception of its ideas ; but when it has received them, it can review, compare, and make deductions from them, without aid from the senses.

What a mystery are we to ourselves ! We cannot explain the powers we possess ; nor the motions

and actions we daily perform. Well may it be said, "We are wonderfully made!" When we look abroad and behold the manifold works of God, are they marvellous in our eyes? And does the great scheme of divine revelation, or do the doctrines of the gospel, appear incomprehensible? Let us only contemplate our own frame, and we become a wonder, and incomprehensible to ourselves.

But how are we to understand the psalmist when he says, "We are fearfully made!" To this inquiry let us now give our attention.

1st. *The expression imports the dignity of a human being in comparison with the other creatures of this lower world.*

Man is so made, that the sight of him impresses a terrore on the beasts of the earth. Moses informs us, that God made man in his own image, and gave him dominion over every beast of the earth. When Noah came forth from the ark, God blessed him and his sons; and said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon all that moveth on the earth. Into your hand they are delivered." To the same purport are the words of the psalmist; "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." These expressions proclaim the dignity of man, and his superiour station, compared with the animal creation.

Many of the animals are superiour to man in strength and activity, and armed with weapons of destruction superiour to any which man naturally possesses for his defence; yet the most ferocious of them will retreat before him. If they ever assault him, it is in some peculiar circumstance; as when they are jealous for their young, provoked with wounds, or enraged by hunger. There is something in the human attitude and aspect, which

strikes them with terrore, and restrains their ferocity. Yea, many of the beasts readily submit to man's dominion, and suffer him to employ their superiour strength in his service. And St. James asserts, "that every kind of beast is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind."

Were it not for this dread of man which is impressed on the beasts of the earth, we should be obliged always to stand armed for our defence against them. Hence the wilderness would become their exclusive habitation; our life would be a state of anxiety and terrore; and we could neither occupy the fields, nor walk the roads, nor sleep in our houses with safety. Thus we may see that man is fearfully made; as the dignity of his person awes the animals of the earth to submission, or else strikes them with dread, and excites them to shun his presence.

2dly. *We are fearfully made; as our frame demonstrates the power, wisdom, and presence of God.*

Such a wonderful composition as man, must be the effect of divine intelligence; must be the work of an infinite, independent, all-wise Creator. David exclaims, " Marvellous are thy works, O God ! and that my soul knoweth full well. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book were all my members written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth."

As the frame of our bodies proves God's agency, so the powers of our mind demonstrate his perfect knowledge. " He who formed the eye, shall not he see ? He that planted the ear, shall not he hear ? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know ?" Yes, he knoweth the thoughts of men.

We then carry about with us clear evidence, that there is a God, who is present with us, around us, and within us; that he observes all our actions, discerns all our intentions, watches all our motions,

and will bring into judgement all our works. What a solemn, what a fearful thought! Shall we not reverence the presence of such a being? Shall we not tremble at the view of our own frame, which brings him present to our minds? Well may we adopt the language of the psalmist, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and know me. Thou knowest my down sitting and uprising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down. Thou art acquainted with all my ways. There is not a word in my tongue, but thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me before and behind, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. Whither shall I go from thy presence, or flee from thy Spirit? Thou possessest my reins. I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

What stupidity must it be, to live without the belief, and act without the fear of God, when we have within ourselves a continual demonstration of his existence, power, wisdom, and providence! The Lord demands, Will ye not tremble at my presence? He is not far from every one of us; and shall not his excellence make us afraid? Wherever we go, we are living witnesses that God is present; and whatever we do, our own frames bear incontestible evidence, that his power giveth efficiency. Our voluntary actions and involuntary motions, our souls and bodies, proclaim the power, wisdom, and presence of the Supreme Being; and at the same time, do most strikingly evince that we are fearfully made.

3dly. *We are fearfully made, as the Creator has impressed upon us evident marks of our immortality and accountableness.*

The distinguishing faculties of our minds demonstrate, that we were created for greater and nobler purposes than any of the animals around us. It does not appear consistent with the Divine wisdom and goodness, and with the economy every

where observable in the works of God, that he should make such beings solely for a sphere so low as the present world, and for a duration so short as our transient life. If our existence is to cease with the death of the body, why has the inspiration of the Almighty given us understanding? If we are designed only to eat, drink, and sleep, provide a successor, and then return to eternal oblivion, of what use is forethought and reflection, moral discernment, and a sense of obligation?

In the present state, we find ourselves capable of progress and improvement; but we never rise to the perfection to which, in a longer space, we might attain. And many of our mortal race are removed, before they have opportunity for any improvement at all. Must there not, then, be another state, in which we may reach the perfection of which our nature is capable, but which is unattainable here? Instinct in beasts, is perfect at first. The young are nearly as sagacious as the old, in finding or constructing their habitations, in seeking and distinguishing their proper food, in the retreating from dangers, in taking their prey, in evading or resisting an enemy, and in every thing which belongs to their sphere of action. In man, reason is developed gradually, is improved by experience, and assisted by example and instruction; and under proper culture, makes observable progress. But before it can reach its end, its progress is arrested by death. Must we not, then, conclude, that there is another state, in which the soul may still press forward, and reach that degree of knowledge and virtue, for which the present life is far too short?

There is in all men a desire of immortality; and this desire will doubtless be gratified. This world is well adapted to our condition, in regard to our bodily frame; for every passion and inclination which belongs to our animal nature, and is not a corruption or perversion of the same, can find an object for gratification. And shall we suppose,

that the desire of immortality has no object? This would be to suppose that the works of God are inconsistent and unharmonious. That the desire of immortality is wrought in us by the Creator, is evident from its universality. If it were the effect of education, it would not possess all men, in all ages and countries, but would be confined to particular persons or places. This argument the Apostle Paul considers as conclusive. "For the earnest expectation of the creature, waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Now he who hath wrought us to this self same thing, is God." This is evident; for in respect to this desire of immortality, the whole creation, or the whole human race, groaneth and travaileth together.

Moreover, we carry with us evidence, not only of immortality, but also of accountableness. There is in every man a moral principle, which, being in any degree enlightened, feels its obligation to avoid the evil and embrace the good. Whenever the difference between moral good and evil is stated, it is discerned and allowed by the mind. With very little instruption, man is enabled to see the essential difference between the nature of virtue and vice. Besides, the paths of wickedness are accompanied with remorse; but the work of righteousness, is peace.

Certainly, then, we are accountable beings; and in a future state shall receive according to our moral characters. And how solemn the thought, that we are under the eye of a holy God, are on probation for his favour, are responsible for all our moral actions; that we must exist forever in another state; and that our condition there, will be according to the course which we shall have pursued here! Does our very make teach us these momentous truths? Surely we may say, We are fearfully made.

4thly. *The same is true respecting our frailty.*

Such is the tenderness of our frame, that in this tumultuous and dangerous world in which we live, we are always exposed to casualties and wounds, to diseases and death. It may, therefore, with much propriety be said, We are fearfully made.

The psalmist prays, “O make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. Surely every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity.” The sacred volume, to express the vanity and frailty of human life, compares it to a shadow, a flower, dust and wind. And, indeed, so precarious is the life of man, that it depends on the breath. God breathed in him the breath of life, and he became a living soul. So when his breath goeth forth, his thoughts perish, and he returneth to his dust. How fragile, then, is the spring of life! It is the breath in our nostrils : a puff of air ; even a vapour, which soon vanishes. It is wind, which passes by, and comes not again.

The lungs, which are the instruments of respiration, are a tender and delicate substance. And how small is the passage which conveys the air to the internal parts, and remits it for a fresh supply! Moreover, this operation must be constant; for a short suspension would occasion death. And how many external accidents, and internal disorders, may occur to obstruct the conveyance of air or destroy the motion of the lungs! If we consider only this fragile, but essential part of the human frame, life must appear truly precarious. But every part of the system, as well as this, is liable to casualty and disease. In this curious and complicated machine, are innumerable threads, vessels, and springs, on which motion and activity depend. And a very slight injury or rupture in any of them, may, under certain circumstances, become fatal. To casualties we are always exposed in our labours and journeys, our diversions and employments. The causes of disease do every where attend us ; for even the air which we breathe, and the food we eat, are

frequently charged with death. Who then can at any time say, that he is sure of another hour? Must not all be constrained to acknowledge, that the springs of life are most brittle? We are often in a situation so critical, whether we discern it or not, that there is but a step, a breath, a span, between us and death.

Had we a clear discernment of the dangers which attend us wherever we go, and of the frailty of the tabernacle in which we dwell, we should live in perpetual fear. It is happy for us that many of our dangers are concealed; otherwise, it is probable, we should often be deterred from the necessary occupations of life. But we see enough to convince us that we are fearfully made;* that we are indeed frail beings.

But how are we to understand the psalmist, when he says, *We are wonderfully made?* To this part of the subject, let us now give our attention.

In the first place, let the bones be considered.

The bones may be regarded as the prop-work, or basis, on which the human body is constructed. They bear the same relation to the animal system, as the frame does to a building. They give shape and firmness to the body; support its various parts; and prevent it from sinking by its own weight. They serve as levers, upon which the muscles act; and defend the brain, the heart, the lungs, and other vital parts, from external injury.

Of the bones, some are hollow, and filled with marrow; others are solid throughout: some are very small; others very large: some are round and others flat: some are plane, and others convex or concave: and all these several forms are requisite for the situations they have to perform. The spine, or back bone, consists of twenty-four vertebræ or small bones, connected together by cartilages, articulations, and ligaments; of which seven belong to the neck, twelve to the back, and five to the loins. In

* This part of the subject is chiefly from the writings of Joseph Lathrop, D. D.

the centre of each vertebra there is a hole for the lodgement and continuance of the spinal marrow, which extends from the brain to the lower part of the body. From these vertebræ the arched bones, called ribs, proceed ; and seven of these join the breast bone on one side, where they terminate in cartilages, and form the cavity of the thorax or breast. The five lower ribs, with a number of muscles, form the cavity of the abdomen. The spine is one of the most admirable mechanical contrivances in the human frame. Had it consisted of only three or four bones, or had the holes in each bone not exactly corresponded, and fitted into each other, the spinal marrow would have been bruised, and life endangered at every bending of the body.

The skull is composed of ten bones ; and about fifty-one are reckoned to belong to the face, the orbits of the eyes, and the jaws, in which the teeth are fixed. There are seldom more than sixteen teeth in each jaw, or thirty-two in all. The number of bones in a human body is generally estimated at about *two hundred and forty-five* ; of which there are reckoned in the skull, head, and face, sixty-one ; in the trunk, or bodily part, sixty-four ; in the arms and hands, sixty ; and in the legs and feet, sixty. The bones are provided with ligaments, or hinges, which bind and fasten them together, and prevent them from being displaced by continually varied motions. And that the ligaments may work smoothly into one another, the joints are separated by cartilages or gristles, and provided with a gland for the secretion of oil or mucus which is constantly exuding into the joints. Hence, every requisite is provided by our benevolent Creator, to prevent pain, and to promote facility of motion. “In considering the joints, says Dr. Paley, there is nothing, perhaps, which ought to move our gratitude more than the reflection, how well they wear. A limb shall swing upon its hinge or play in its socket, many hundred times in an hour, for sixty years together, without

diminution of agility, which is a long time for any thing to last, for any thing so much worked as the joints are." These few remarks may serve to show that the bones should be considered as divine specimens of the wonderful structure of our bodily frame.

2dly. *The muscular system is a demonstrative proof, that we are wonderfully made.*

A muscle is a bundle of fleshy, and often tendinous fibres. The fleshy fibres compose the body of the muscle; and the tendinous fibres, the extremities. Some muscles are long and round; some plain and circular; some have spiral, and some have straight fibres; some are double, having a tendon running through the body from head to tail; some have two or more tendinous branches running through, with various rows and orders of fibres. All these, and several other varieties, are essentially requisite for the respective offices they have to perform in the animal system. The muscles constitute the fleshy parts of the human body, and give it that varied and beautiful form we observe over its surface. But their principal design, is to serve as the organs of motion. They are inserted by strong tendinous extremities, into the different bones of which the human skeleton is composed; and, by their contraction, and distention, give rise to all the movements of the body. The muscles, therefore, may be considered as so many cords attached to the bones; and the Author of nature has fixed them according to the most perfect principles of mechanism, so as to produce the fittest motions in the parts for the movement of which they are intended.

One of the most wonderful properties of the muscles, is the extraordinary force they exert, although composed of such slender threads or fibres. The following facts, in relation to this point, are demonstrated by the celebrated Borelli, in his work concerning animal motion. "If a man, with his arm

hanging directly downwards, lift a weight of twenty pounds, with the third, or last joint of his thumb, the muscle which bends the thumb, and bears that weight, exerts a force of about three thousand pounds. When any one, standing upon his feet, springs upwards to the height of two feet, if the weight of such a man be one hundred and fifty pounds, the muscles employed in that action, will exert a force of two thousand greater; that is to say, a force of about three hundred thousand pounds. The heart at each pulse, or contraction, by which it protrudes the blood out of the arteries into the veins, exerts a force of above a hundred thousand pounds." Who can contemplate this amazing strength of the muscular system, without admiration of the power and wisdom of the Creator, who has thus endued a bundle of threads, each of them smaller than a hair, with such a degree of mechanical force?

There have been about four hundred and forty-six muscles in the human body, which have been dissected and distinctly described; every one of which is essential to the performance of some one motion or other, which contributes to our ease and enjoyment; and, in most instances, a great number of them is required to perform their different functions at the same time. It has been calculated that about a hundred muscles are employed every time we breathe. "Breathing with ease," says Dr. Paley, "is a blessing of every moment; yet, of all others, it is that which we possess with the least consciousness. A man in an asthma, is the only person who knows how to estimate this blessing."

Muscles, with their tendons, are the instruments by which animal motion is performed. And a muscle acts only by contraction. Its force is exerted in no other way. When the exertion ceases, the muscle is relaxed by returning to its former state, but without energy. The consideration of the muscular system does strikingly evince, that we are wonderfully made.

3dly. *If we notice the heart and blood vessels, we shall discern the propriety of the exclamation, I am wonderfully made.*

The heart is a hollow muscular organ, of a conical shape, and consists of four distinct cavities. The two largest are called ventricles; and the two smallest, auricles. The ventricles send out the blood to the arteries; the auricles receive it from the veins. The heart is enclosed in the pericardium, a membranous bag, which contains a quantity of water, or lymph. This water lubricates the heart, and facilitates all its motions. The heart is the general reservoir of the blood. When the heart contracts, the blood is propelled from the right ventricle, into the lungs, through the pulmonary arteries; which, like all the other arteries, are furnished with valves that play easily forward, but permit not the blood to return toward the heart. The blood, after circulating through the lungs, and having been there revived by coming in contact with the air, and imbibing a portion of its oxygen, returns into the left auricle of the heart, by the pulmonary vein. At the same instant, the left ventricle drives the blood into the aorta, a large artery, which sends off branches to supply the head and arms. Another large branch of the aorta, descends along the inside of the back bone, and detaches numerous ramifications to nourish the bowels and inferiour extremities.

After serving the most remote extremities of the body, the arteries are converted into veins, which, in their return to the heart, gradually unite into larger branches, till the whole terminate in one great trunk, called the *vena cava*, which discharges itself into the right auricle of the heart, and completes the circulation. As soon as the blood is received by the heart from the veins of the body, and before it is sent out again into its arteries, it is carried, by the force of the contraction of the heart, and by means of the separate pulmonary artery, to the lungs, and made to enter their manifold vessels;

from which, after being invigorated by coming in contact with the air, it is brought back by the large, pulmonary vein once more to the heart, to be from thence distributed anew into the system. This assigns to the heart a double office. The pulmonary circulation is a system within a system; and one action of the heart is the origin of both.

Each ventricle of the heart is reckoned to contain about one ounce, or two table spoonfuls of blood. The heart contracts four thousand times every hour; and consequently, there passes through it, two hundred and fifty pounds of blood in one hour. And if the mass of blood in a human body be reckoned at an average of twenty-five pounds, it will follow, that the whole mass of blood passes through the heart, and consequently through the thousands of ramifications of the veins and arteries, fourteen times every hour; or, about once every four minutes. We may acquire a rude idea of the force with which the blood is impelled from the heart, by considering the velocity with which water issues from a syringe, or from the pipe of a fire engine. Could we behold these rapid motions incessantly going on within us, it would overpower our minds with astonishment, and even with terrour.

The arteries into which the blood is forced, branch in every direction through the body, like the roots and branches of a tree; running through the substance of the bones, and every part of the animal frame, till they are lost in such fine tubes as to be wholly invisible. In the parts where the arteries are lost to the sight, the veins take their rise; and, in their commencement, are also imperceptible. Thus we see, that the arteries and veins are two systems of blood vessels; and that the heart is the engine which works their machinery, and causes the circulation of the blood. One grand purpose to be answered, is the distributing of nourishment from our daily food to every part; even to every extremity of the body. And as an arterial

rupture or wound would be more dangerous than that of a vein, the arteries lie deeper, and are formed with much tougher and stronger coats than the veins. Hence, the system of the heart and blood vessels proclaim, that we are wonderfully made.

4thly. *The same will also appear if we consider respiration.*

The organs of respiration are the lungs. They are divided into five lobes; three of which lie on the right, and two on the left side of the thorax. The substance of the lungs is chiefly composed of infinite ramifications of the trachea, or windpipe; which, after gradually becoming more and more minute, terminate in little cells, or vesicles, which have a free communication with one another. At each inspiration, these pipes and cells are filled with air, which is again discharged by expiration. In this manner, a circulation of air, which is necessary to the existence of men and animals, is constantly kept up as long as life remains. The air-cells of the lungs open into the windpipe, by which they communicate with the external atmosphere. The whole internal structure of the lungs is lined by a transparent membrane, estimated at only the thousandth part of an inch in thickness; but whose surface, from its various convolutions, measures sixteen square feet, which is equal to the external surface of the body. On this thin and extensive membrane, innumerable veins and arteries are distributed, some of them finer than hairs; and through these vessels all the blood of the system is successively propelled, by a most curious and admirable mechanism.

It has been computed, that the lungs, on an average, contain about two hundred and eighty cubick inches, or about five English quarts of air. At each inspiration, about forty cubick inches of air are received into the lungs, and the same quantity discharged at each expiration. On the supposition

that twenty respirations take place in a minute, it will follow, that in one minute, we inhale eight hundred cubick inches ; in an hour, forty-eight thousand ; and in a day, one million one hundred and fifty-two thousand cubick inches ; a quantity which would fill seventy-seven wine hogsheads, and would weigh forty pounds. Truly wonderful the machinery in the formation of man !

By means of this function, a vast body of air is daily brought into contact with the mass of blood, and communicates to it its vivifying influence; therefore it is of the utmost importance to health, that the air, of which we breathe so considerable a quantity, should be pure and uncontaminated with noxious effluvia. In our present state, it is essential to life that we exist in the element of air. And how mysterious the formation of the lungs, to be receiving constant and fresh supplies, for the purpose of respiration and the continuance of animal life ! Although the act of breathing is a constant succession of inhaling and exhaling the surrounding air, still we are generally almost insensible of this vital impulse. But whenever we give our minds to the consideration of the curious and marvellous machinery which produces respiration, we contemplate a system that proclaims, We are wonderfully made !

5thly. *The process by which our daily food is digested is truly wonderful.*

Digestion is performed by the stomach, which is a membranous and muscular bag, furnished with two orifices. By the one, it has a communication with the throat ; and by the other with the bowels. The food, after being moistened by the saliva, is received into the stomach, where it is still farther diluted by the gastrick juice, which has the power of dissolving every kind of animal and vegetable substance. Part of it is afterwards absorbed by the lymphatick and lacteal vessels, and carried into the circulating system, and converted into blood,

for supplying that nourishment which the perpetual waste of our bodies demands.

Our food undergoes two great preparations, before it becomes nutritive to our bodies. The first is by mastication and moisture in the mouth. The second by the process of digestion in the stomach. The last is a surprising dissolution; for it converts the aliment into pulp, which, though lately consisting of perhaps ten different viands, is reduced to nearly an uniform substance, and to a state fitted for yielding its essence, which is called chyle, but which more nearly resembles milk than any other liquor with which it can be compared. For the straining off of this fluid from the digested aliment in the course of its long progress through the body, myriads of capillary tubes, or pipes as small as hairs, open their orifices into the cavity of every part of the intestines. These tubes which are so fine and slender as not to be visible, unless when distended with chyle, soon unite into larger branches, which convey it into a common reservoir, or receptacle, containing about two table spoonfuls. From this, a duct or main pipe, discharges it into a large vein, which soon conveys the chyle, now flowing along with the blood, to the heart. The action of the intestines pushes forward the grosser part of the aliment at the same time that the more subtle parts, which we call chyle, are by a series of gentle compressions, squeezed into the narrow orifices of the lacteal veins. And animal digestion carries about it the marks of being a power and process completely distinct from every other, at least from every chemical process, with which we are acquainted. When we consider the process of digestion, its several connexions, relations, and purposes, we may well acknowledge with admiration, We are wonderfully made!

6thly. *Our wonder will be justly excited from a few appropriate remarks in regard to perspiration.*

Perspiration is the evacuation of the juices of the

body through the pores of the skin. It has been calculated, that there are above three hundred thousand millions of pores in the glands of the skin which covers the body of a middle sized man. Through these pores, more than one half of what we eat and drink passes off by insensible perspiration. If we consume eight pounds of food in a day, five pounds of it are insensibly discharged in this manner. During a night of seven hours' sleep, we perspire about forty ounces, or two pounds and a half. At an average, we may estimate the discharge from the surface of the body, by sensible and insensible perspiration, to be from half an ounce to four ounces an hour. This is a most wonderful part of the animal economy, and is absolutely necessary to our health, and even to our very existence. When partially obstructed, colds, rheumatisms, fevers, and other inflammatory disorders, are produced ; and were it completely obstructed, the vital functions would be clogged and impeded in their movements, and death would inevitably ensue. Perspiration is effected in consequence of the action and heat throughout the human system ; and it is increased by external heat and bodily exercise. It may be impeded by various means, external and internal. Thus the nutritive portion of our food which does not become incorporated into our bodies, is evacuated through the pores of the skin. How mysterious the mechanism of perspiration ! How wonderfully are we made !

7thly. Sensation, or perception by means of the senses, furnishes another argument to convince us that we are wonderfully made.

The nerves are generally considered as the instruments of sensation. They are soft white cords, which proceed from the brain and spinal marrow. They come forth originally by pairs. Ten pairs proceed from the medullary substance of the brain, which are distributed to all parts of the head and neck. Thirty pairs proceed from the spinal mar-

row, through the vertebræ, to all the other parts of the body, there being forty in all. These nerves, the ramifications of which are infinitely various and minute, are distributed upon the heart, lungs, blood-vessels, bowels, and muscles, till they terminate on the skin, or external covering of the body. Impressions of external objects are received by the brain from the adjacent organs of sense; and the brain exercises its commands over the muscles and limbs by means of the nerves.

The impression of outward and material objects upon the organs of sense, excite within us ideas of themselves, accommodated to their respective natures, so far as it is the design of our Creator that we should understand them. The medium of sensation is admitted to be by the instrumentality of the nervous system, which may be regarded as an expansion of the brain, distributed in its fine and delicate filaments to every part of the body. But how the impression, or vibration, from external objects, reaches the sensitive and intellectual principles of our nature, and becomes the efficient cause of our ideas, is far removed from our comprehension. The action of matter upon spirit remains yet unexplained, and is perhaps inexplicable to the limited penetration of the human mind.

With regard to the various colouring of the external world, an important discovery has taught philosophers, since the days of the great Newton, that colour exists neither in the mind, nor in the objects themselves, which we contemplate, but in the rays of light, reflected from their surfaces. Hence the varied position, or changes, of the external particles of an object, produce the different colours which we behold.

I shall now conclude these descriptions, with the following summary of the parts of the human system. The bones, by their joints and solidity, form the foundation of this fine machine. The ligaments are strings, which unite the parts together. The

muscles are fleshy substances, which act as elastic springs, to put them in motion. The nerves, which are dispersed over the whole body, connect all parts together.

The arteries and veins, like rivulets, convey life and health throughout. The heart, placed in the centre, is the focus, where the blood collects; or the acting power, by means of which it circulates, and is preserved. The lungs, by means of another power, draw in the external air, and expel hurtful vapours. The stomach and intestines are the magazines, where every thing that is required for the daily supply, is prepared. The brain, the seat of perception, memory, and reason, is formed in a manner suitable to the dignity of its inhabitants. The senses, which are the soul's ministers, warn it of all that is necessary either for its pleasure or use. But the union of soul and body, so as to constitute but one being, is the wonder of wonders, in regard to our existence. That natures so essentially different as matter and mind, should have the most intimate, mutual sympathies and influence over each other, is truly astonishing. The admirable mechanism of the various senses, should excite our wonder; and their dignified offices of administration to the soul, are marvellous indeed.

When we contemplate the mysterious union of our souls and bodies; their oneness in regard to being, that they are to be a long time separate in different worlds, and at last re-united, we cannot hesitate to adopt the language of the devout psalmist. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The various descriptions to which we have been attending, are but a few, and those very imperfect delineations of the divine wonders exhibited in the existence of a human being. But these short sketches do naturally call forth the exclamation, Adorable Creator! with what skill hast thou formed us!

SERMON XV.

THE FEARFUL AND WONDERFUL FORMATION OF MAN.

PSALM CXXXIX. 14.

I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

THE subject which has been illustrated in the preceding discourse, suggests a variety of important reflections, both intellectual and moral.

1st. *Man is an entirely dependant being.*

As the economy of the human frame, when seriously contemplated, has a tendency to excite admiration and astonishment, so it ought to impress us with a sense of our continual dependance on a Supreme power. What an immense multiplicity of machinery must be in action, to enable us to breathe, to feel, and to walk! Hundreds of bones of diversified forms, connected together by various modes of articulation—hundreds of muscles to produce motion, each of them acting in at least ten different capacities—hundreds of tendons and ligaments to connect the bones and muscles—hundreds of arteries to convey the blood to the remotest part of the system—hundreds of veins to bring it back to its reservoir, the heart—thousands of glands, secreting humours of various kinds from the blood—thousands of lacteal and lymphatick tubes, absorbing and conveying nutriment to the circulating fluid—millions of pores through which the perspiration is continually issuing—an infinity of ramifications of nerves, diffusing sensation throughout all the parts of this exquisite machine; and the heart at every pulsation exerting a force of

a hundred thousand pounds, in order to preserve all this complicated machinery in constant operation ! The whole of this vast system of mechanism must be in action, before we can walk across our apartments.

We admire the operation of a steam-engine, and the force it exerts. But, though it is constructed of the hardest materials which the mines can supply, in a few months some of its essential parts are worn and deranged, even though its action be frequently discontinued. Yet, the animal machine, though constructed, for the most part, of the softest and most flabby substances, can go on without intermission in all its diversified movements, by night and by day, for the space of eighty or a hundred years; the heart giving ninety-six thousand strokes every twenty-four hours, and the whole mass of blood rushing through a thousand pipes of all sizes every four minutes ! And, is it man that governs these nice and complicated movements ? Did he set the heart in motion, or endue it with the muscular force it exerts ? And when it has ceased to beat, can he command it again to resume its functions ? No ; for man knows neither the secret springs of the machinery within him, nor the half of the purposes for which they serve, or of the movements they perform. And can any thing more strikingly demonstrate our dependance every moment on a superiour Agent ? Were a single pin of the machinery within us, and over which we have no controul, either broken or deranged, a thousand movements might instantly be interrupted, and our bodies left to crumble into dust.

2dly. *The Divine benevolence is very conspicuous.*

This subject is not only peculiarly adapted to excite our admiration in view of the manifold wisdom of God, but also strikingly to display his wonderful goodness. How many things in our frame must go right, for us to be an hour at ease ! How many more still, that we may be vigorous and ac-

tive! Yet vigour and activity are, in a vast plurality of instances, preserved in human bodies, notwithstanding they depend upon so great a number of instruments of motion; and although the defect or disorder of a very minute instrument may be attended with grievous inconvenience, if not with extreme pain. Let me notice the instance of a certain man, who in general was in good health, and yet in a sad state.—Owing to the want of the use of the two little muscles that serve to lift up the eyelids, he had almost lost the use of his sight, being constrained, as long as this defect lasted, to shove up his eyelids every moment with his own hands. And how little do those who enjoy the perfect use of their organs, know the comprehensiveness of the blessing! They may perceive the desirable result, but how insensible are they of the multitude of occurrences and rectitudes by which it is effected!

Let us consider for a moment, how manifold is the exhibition of divine goodness in some of the properties of the tongue. It has been said, as a fact in general, that when nature attempts to work two or more purposes by one instrument, she does both or all imperfectly. But is this true of the tongue, regarded as an instrument of speech, of taste, or of glutition? So much otherwise, that most persons, perhaps nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand, by the instrumentality of this one organ, speak, taste, and swallow very well. Indeed, the constant warmth and moisture of the tongue, the thinness of the skin, and the papillæ upon its surface, qualify this organ for its office of tasting, as much as its inextricable multiplicity of fibres do for the rapid movements, which are necessary to speech.

We may also see from one or two remarks, how happy it is for us, that our vital motions are involuntary. What a labour, if we had the care of keeping our stomachs at work, and our hearts beating!

Suppose these things did not depend upon our efforts, but upon our bidding, or attention, they would leave us no leisure for any thing else. We should have to be continually upon the watch, and live in constant fear. Nor would such a constitution allow us to sleep. How benignant, then, our adorable Creator, to watch and order all the springs and motions essential to life!

Moreover, the proportions and beauty of the human frame do show forth the divine goodness. Only consider what the parts and materials are, of which the fairest body is composed, and no further observation will be necessary to show how well these things are wrapped up, so as to form a mass which shall be capable of symmetry in its proportion, and of beauty in its aspect. How are the bones covered, the bowels concealed, the roughness of the muscles smoothed and softened! And how over the whole, is spread an integument, which converts the disgusting materials of a dissecting room into an object of attraction to the sight; or, at least, presents that appearance which imparts ease and satisfaction to the mind! Were it possible that we could view the mechanism of our bodies, the sight would terrify and overwhelm us. Would we dare make a single movement, or take a step, if we saw our blood circulating, the tendons pulling, the lungs blowing, the humours filtrating, and all the incomprehensible assemblage of fibres, tubes, pumps, valves, currents, pivots, which sustain an existence so precarious, and a being so presumptuous? The agreeable symmetry of parts, and the beautiful external texture of the human frame, exhibit indubitable evidence of benevolent design, and of great attention and accuracy in prosecuting that design. Their author and designer is the God of love.

The several senses might be considered as so many distinct arguments to prove the benevolence of the Divine Being towards us. They are not

only instruments for the necessaries and continuance of life, and of knowledge to the soul, but also of a constant train of manifold enjoyments, both bodily and mental. At the mere mention of the terms *hearing, seeing, tasting, feeling, and smelling*, the recollection of their thousands of pleasures is necessarily called to mind. Our souls and bodies are both so constituted in their various faculties, as to be heralds for proclaiming the praises not only of the wisdom, but also of the marvellous goodness of God.

3dly. *The study of the human frame has a powerful tendency to excite emotions of gratitude.*

Man is naturally a thoughtless and ungrateful creature. This is partly to be ascribed to his scanty and confused views of the wonders of the human frame, and of the admirable economy of the visible world; and this ignorance is owing to the want of those specifick instructions, which ought to be communicated by parents and teachers in connexion with religion. For there is no rational being, who is acquainted with the structure of his animal system, and reflects upon it with the least degree of attention, but must feel a sentiment of admiration and gratitude. The science which unfolds to us the economy of our bodies, shows us on what an infinity of springs, and motions, and adaptations, our life and comfort depend. And when we consider that all these movements are performed without the least care or laborious effort on our part, if we be not entirely brutish and insensible of our dependance on a superior power, we must be filled with emotions of gratitude towards him whose hands have made and fashioned us, and who giveth us life, and breath, and all things.

Some of the motions to which I have adverted, depend upon our will; and with what celerity do they obey its commands! Before we can rise from our chair and walk across the room, a hundred muscles must be set in motion; every one of these

must be relaxed or constricted just to a certain degree, and no more; and all must act harmoniously at the same instant of time; and, at the command of the soul, all these movements are instantaneously performed. When I wish to lift my hand to my head, every part of the body requisite to produce the effect, is put in motion. The nerves are braced, the muscles stretched or relaxed, the bones play in their sockets, and the whole animal machine concurs in the action, as if every nerve and muscle had heard a sovereign and resistless call. If I wish the next moment to extend my hand to my foot, all these muscles are thrown into a different state, and a new set are brought along with them into action. And thus we may vary, every moment, the movements of the muscular system, and the mechanical actions it produces, by a simple change in our volition. Were we not daily accustomed to such varied and voluntary movements, or could we contemplate them in any other machine, we should be lost in wonder and astonishment.

Besides these voluntary motions, there are a thousand important functions which have no dependence upon our will. Whether we think of it or not, whether we be sleeping or waking, sitting or walking, the heart is incessantly exerting its muscular power at the centre of the system, and sending off streams of blood through hundreds of pipes—the lungs are continually expanding and contracting their thousand vesicles, and imbibing the vital principle of the air—the stomach is grinding the food—the lacteals and lymphaticks are extracting nourishment from the blood—the liver and kidneys drawing off their secretions—and the perspiration issuing from millions of pores. These, and many other important functions, with which we are unacquainted, and over which we have no control, ought to be regarded as the immediate agency of the Deity within us, and should incite our incessant admiration and praise.

In every breath we draw and emit, there is an important reason for our hearts to flow with gratitude to God. That part of the air inhaled into the lungs which is vital, serves to purify and inspirit the blood. The remaining part, which is evolved, is rendered fetid, and entirely unfit to be breathed again. In consequence of the warmth attracted from our system, it becomes lighter than common air; therefore, it rises above our heads before the next inspiration. Were it not for this circumstance, it would accumulate on the surface of the earth, and particularly in our apartments, to such a degree as to produce diseases, pestilence, and death, in rapid succession. But, being a little lighter than the surrounding air, it flies upwards, and we never breathe it again, till it enter into new and salutary combinations. How does every thing pertaining to our frame, or relating to our existence, admonish us that our souls should be continually ascending to God with the most lively emotions of gratitude!

Permit me now to notice a peculiarity in the constitution of our animal frame, which we are apt to overlook, and for which we are never sufficiently grateful; and that is, the power it possesses of self restoration. A wound heals up of itself—a broken bone is made firm again by a callus—and a dead part is separated and thrown off. If all the wounds we have ever received, were still open and bleeding afresh, to what a miserable condition should we be reduced! But by a system of internal powers beyond all human comprehension, as to the mode of their operation, such dismal effects are effectually prevented. In short, when we consider that health depends upon such a numerous assemblage of moving organs, and that a single spring out of action, might derange the whole machine, and put a stop to all its complicated movements, can we refrain from joining with the Psalmist in his pious exclamation and grateful resolution, “How precious are thy wonderful contrivances concerning

me; O God! how great is the sum of them! I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well."

4thly. *This discourse should be improved as an excitement for us to become more particularly and extensively informed in regard to the manifold subjects of divine revelation.*

In proportion to the extent and propriety of our investigations into the numerous and important truths which God has revealed, so shall we be qualified to render to his name that glory which is his due. Consequently, then, if we do not make suitable exertions, and improve all the means granted us for the enlarging of our conceptions in relation to the divine works, we are guilty of robbing God of his declarative glory. Some who profess Christianity, seem to be content with the mere consciousness that they have a soul and body; and imagine it does not concern them to inquire particularly about them, so as to understand the human system, and the offices of the faculties of the soul. But such a sentiment is indeed unbecoming a heathen. Professed infidels ought to be ashamed to behold professing Christians satisfied with scanty and vague views of so many important subjects, presented to them in the divine word. Such conduct too much resembles that of the most brutish and stupid sinner, who would consider the highest attainments of religion to consist in the mere belief of a God, a heaven, and a hell.

To overlook the amazing scene of Divine intelligence, as exhibited in the human system, or to consider it as beneath our notice, marks a weak and undiscriminating mind, if it be not a characteristick of impiety. The man who disregards the visible displays of infinite Wisdom, or who neglects to investigate them when opportunity offers, acts as if he considered himself already possessed of a sufficient portion of intelligence, and stood in no need of such sensible assistances to direct his conceptions of the

Creator. Pride and false conceptions of the nature and design of true religion, frequently lie at the foundation of all that indifference and neglect with which the visible works of God are treated, by those who make pretensions to a high degree of spiritual attainments. The truly pious man will trace with wonder and delight, the footsteps of his father and his God, wherever they appear in the variegated scenes of creation around him, and will be filled with sorrow and contrition of heart, that amidst his excursions and solitary walks, he has so often disregarded the works of the Lord, and the operation of his hands.

These remarks are made for the purpose of emulating professed Christians to expand their conceptions, and enable them to take large and comprehensive views of the perfections and the providence of the Almighty. It is much to be regretted that so many members of the Christian church are absolute strangers to such studies and contemplations, while the time and attention that might have been devoted to such exercises, have, in many cases, been usurped by the most grovelling affections, by foolish pursuits, and slanderous conversation. But shall the most trifling occurrences be deemed worthy of attention, and occupy much of our precious time, and shall the mighty acts of the Lord, and the visible wonders of his power and wisdom, be thrown completely into the shade ? To survey with an eye of intelligence, the wide extended theatre of the Divine operations ; to mark the agency of the eternal Mind in every object we behold, and in every movement within us and around us, are some of the noblest attainments of the rational soul ; and in conjunction with every other christian study and acquirement, tend to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto every good work. By such studies we are, in some measure, assimilated to the principalities above, whose powers of intellect are ever employed in such investigations ;

and are gradually preparing for bearing a part in their immortal hymn, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

5thly. *This subject suggests the importance of daily preparation for death, and should awaken our attention to the vast concerns of immortality.*

Our bodies must return to the common mass of their original clay ; and our souls enter the invisible world. Hence the voice of wisdom calls to us, to prepare for the change which is before us, and which may be very near. Beings, accountable to God as we are, designed for immortality, shortly to be removed, and insecure of another day, should be making constant preparations for our departure and entrance upon another state of existence.

And in the view of human frailty, nothing can appear more reasonable than daily prayer. How does it become us to abound in ejaculations to the Framer and Preserver of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits ? Would a man who believed this day to be his last, neglect to call upon God ? Would he go forth into the business and company of the world without directing a thought, or addressing a petition to him ? And indeed no man knows on any day, but that it may be his last. Every one, then, on each morning, ought to invoke the blessing of God's protection, through the day, to walk in his fear ; and at evening should not dare retire to rest, till he confess his sins, acknowledge the manifold benefits of the day, and implore the divine blessing through the night. Every thing around us, and all the circumstances of our being, call upon us to pray without ceasing. We have the sentence of death in ourselves. Our frame declares its own frailty, and predicts its own dissolution. From our own selves

* This part of the discourse is chiefly selected from the Christian Philosopher.

we are taught the most interesting lessons, and derive the most impressive exhortations. We are fearfully made.

If we hearken not to the solemn language of our own frail bodies, to the precepts of weakness and pain, of sickness and decay, what admonitions would command our attention, and impress our minds? How unaccountable is the stupidity of mortals! They complain of infirmities, and groan under pains; but do not realize that they must die, must pass to another world, and there be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body. And how easy for that power which made our wonderful frame, to cause its dissolution. The air and food essential to life, may become the means of death. When in our full strength, we are receiving the richest nourishment and stimulus to promote vigour and activity, these may only serve to feed and render fatal some fever, and prepare our bodies richer food for worms. Innumerable unseen dangers surround us; and our whole frame is liable to the attack and arrest of death. Notwithstanding all our circumspection to prevent diseases, and our most vigilant exertions to promote health, we die; unless the Lord continually watch and defend all the springs of life. The king of terrors has thousands of avenues to enter our clayey tabernacle, and myriads at his command continually armed with the weapons of death. And nothing but Omnipotence can secure us one moment from his fatal arrest, or prevent any one of his legions from discharging some of his deadly instruments, which are held continually levelled at our hearts. We are constantly as dependant on God for the continuance of life, as we were for our first breath. Then may our great concern be to prepare for death, and for a glorious immortality!

6thly. *If we are wonderfully made in regard to our present frame, we may infer, that the bodies of the*

righteous in the resurrection will be incomparably glorious.

When these mortal frames shall be raised, they will be so much changed in their constitution, as to wear, in various respects, an entirely new character. They will be incorruptible, immortal bodies, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality. As they will serve God day and night in his temple, so will they be raised in power, and endowed with faculties suited to the never ceasing employments and enjoyments of the heavenly world. At the resurrection the bodies of the saints will be arrayed in glory and beauty. The Saviour will change their vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body. "When the Archangel shall sound his trump, in the twinkling of an eye the earth will heave; tombs disclose; and myriads of spiritually arrayed forms, bright as the sun, arise and ascend to heaven." Are believers often affected in view of their frail, perishable bodies? What consolation! How sublime, how delightful the doctrine of the resurrection! The future glory of these animal frames, when changed into spiritual bodies, will exceed the utmost conceptions of human imagination. They will be exalted, adorned, and enraptured as suitable mansions for glorified spirits. Though our mortal frames are a subject of interesting contemplation, yet how inferiour, compared to their future incorruptible, immortal, and spiritual attributes? The constitution, arrangement, and qualities of glorified bodies, will doubtless be truly delightsome, astonishing, and inconceivably glorious.

SERMON XVI.

A MAN'S RELIGION MAY BE HIS RUIN.

ISAIAH XXVIII. 20.

For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.

MANKIND are subjects of the highest prosperity and affluence, and of the lowest depths of adversity and poverty. Uniformity is by no means the common lot of the human race ; but diversity and contrast are peculiarities, as it respects the condition of man. There are not only the high and low, rich and poor, bond and free ; but innumerable varied are their situations and circumstances. Through the journey of life, some make use of an elegant cane ; whilst others are assisted by an old and crooked staff. Some are cheered with the enjoyment of a comfortable degree of health, all their days ; and others are scarcely ever exempt from disease. Some live in great style as it respects their houses and equipage ; but others inhabit an uncomfortable hut, and scarcely obtain the necessaries of life. Dives fared sumptuously every day, while Lazarus enjoyed but few of the good things of this present world. But whether mankind in their pilgrimage state, travel a road comparatively smooth and pleasant, or rough and unpleasant, they are soon entombed in the silent grave ; their bodies intermingled with the common dust, and their souls in a world of spirits. Hence, the manner of our journeying through this vale of tears, is of little importance, compared with our future destiny—our eternal home.

The words of the text, are a proverbial saying, and their most literal meaning is expressive of a state of uneasiness and distress. When a bed is too short, a person cannot lie at his ease, but is perplexed in the hours of rest. When the covering is too narrow, he is exposed to the severities of a cold night. The application, or lesson of instruction to the Jews, was to teach them that their confederacy with the Egyptians could not protect them against the Assyrians and Chaldeans; nor could their numbers and fortifications defend them against the Romans, when God should forsake them, and become their enemy.

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious corner Stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth, shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goeth forth, it shall take you; for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night; and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

We are figuratively taught this moral: that a man's religion may be his ruin.

In the illustration of this subject, it is my design to bring to view some of those kinds of religion that are founded not on a sure, but false foundation; and to show that they are essentially deficient, and ruinous to the soul. Among the different varieties and sects of religion in the world, there are strictly but two kinds, the true and false. The one will support a man in the solemn and trying hour

of death, and lead to joys on high; but the other then forsakes the soul, when it is destroyed suddenly, and that without remedy.

1st. *Infidelity is essentially defective.*

By infidelity, is meant deism, or a rejection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as the only Mediator between God and man, and as the only possible way of salvation. Persons of this description, glory in the light of nature as being sufficient to lead to the true knowledge of God, and to teach all those ways which are necessary to glorify him. But through the depravity of the human heart, and the consequent blindness of the mind, where mankind have been left to nature's light, they have formed strange ideas concerning a God, and their worship has been a scene of the most degrading infatuation. Some have been content with a god of clay; others, of wood. Some have had a silver god, and others have had one formed of gold. Creatures have been worshipped as the Creator, and natural objects adored as Deity. But how essentially defective such views and service; how abominable in the sight of a holy God, and how degrading to man, considered as a rational and immortal being! Surely nature's light is become darkness in consequence of our apostacy. It leads none of the human race to know, to love, and serve the true God; for all pursue their own vain imaginations, and their foolish heart is most strangely darkened.

Wherever is deism, there is a land of darkness and of the shadow of death. Instead of a system of superiour light, its tendency is to banish the Bible from the face of the earth, to take from the bosom of the believer his only hope of immortality, and to shroud him in his dying moments in overwhelming darkness. And can that be called a benevolent religion, which blots out of existence the angels; deprives all the redeemed of eternal life; and which would pluck from the head of the Divine Redeemer every crown except that of thorns?

But let the deist have the light of divine revelation ; let him have the Bible in his hand, and form consistent and exalted views of the character and designs of God. Is he not now built on a rock, and not on a sandy foundation ? No : for when he knows there is a God, he glorifies him not as God. And as to the sins of his heart and life, reason is insufficient to lead him to true repentance ; and the influence of the Holy Spirit he resists, and denies its necessity. To godly sorrow, and that repentance which is unto salvation, he is an entire stranger ; and that he is a transgressor, not only the word of God, but his own conscience also bears witness. When stung with guilt and alarmed at his condition, he denies the Lord Jesus ; and there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. When the law condemns, of the gospel he is ashamed. To what then can his hope be compared, except to that of the hypocrite's, which perisheth ? Shall we say, he hopes for pardon on the account of repentance ? But infidelity is opposed to a penitent life, and makes its boast in a self-justifying spirit. "Notwithstanding sin has entered the world, and death by sin ; and death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." But the advocates for deism may reply, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement. Alas ! how has the hour of death blasted the expectations of thousands, and too late convinced them that their hopes were a most delusive and wretched dream !

Reason is too short ; in its greatest extent, it is far too narrow to point out to a world lying in wickedness, the unerring way of salvation. Those who reject divine revelation as the only sure guide to eternal life, do frequently have their minds distressed, and they have no efficient comforter. In vain do they attempt to make their beds smooth and easy ; for they frequently lie down on their pillows with anguish in their souls. All the covering which they

can frame to hide their guilt, is a vain refuge of lies; for the eye of Omniscience searches them through and through. And says the Saviour, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." He adds, "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels. And whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." If the eyes of unbelievers were not shut against the word of God, how would such alarming declarations of the Redeemer make them shudder, and cause their hearts to quake for fear! Now they hear the voice of mercy, and yet refuse that salvation which was the purchase of a Saviour's death. But when they shall hear the voice of the Archangel, will not their religion appear essentially defective, and fail them as a false refuge, in the great day of trial and final decision?

2dly. *Morality will not be able to stand the test before the judgement seat of Christ.*

The moralist, perhaps, would divide his religion into external and internal. External morality relates to the outward conduct of man towards man, and to the refraining from open impiety towards God. Thus we see some who are courteous and upright in their daily deportment, and whose tongues are not ready to revile others; neither are they the instruments of profanity. They are not only free from injustice, intemperance, and irreligion, but are amiable and engaging in their manners. Instead of wrangling and contentions, they lead peaceable and quiet lives. Perhaps they are hospitable and charitable, condescending and forbearing, and even ornaments to society.

Moreover, they may turn their attention to what is internal: may guard against violent anger; against a spirit of hatred, envy, and jealousy; and may cul-

tivate those dispositions which are humane and magnanimous. And O, that such virtues were more general ; that they might abound in all. They would appear the more interesting, and their beauty shine in more lively colours, if we should only contrast the deformities of immorality and ungodliness.

But is not such a religion complete ? Is it essentially defective, and insufficient to crown mortals with glorious immortality ? Hear the declaration of eternal truth : “ Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Now the one who takes morality as a substitute for the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit ; and who trusts in it as the foundation of his hopes and salvation, is a stranger to the renewing grace and pardoning mercy of God ; and, like Nicodemus, wonders, How can these things be ? If a person see not the plague, the awful depravity of his own heart, and feel himself in a state of alienation and apostacy from God, he will seek to be justified by works, and not by grace. But compared with the divine law, how is the religion of any man too short, too narrow, and essentially defective ! How must uneasiness and distress seize the soul, when it considers the solemn denunciation, “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.”

The moralist walks in his own light, and not according to the light of the gospel. He may have a lively imagination, but still he rejects Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. Hear the saying of the Prophet Isaiah : “ Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks ; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.” Then how will morality fail its votaries in the great day of trial and final decision.—Perhaps the inquiry will be made, Has not the Saviour abundantly inculcated all the duties of morality : and have not the prophets and apos-

tles interwoven it in all their writings ? They certainly have, and every minister of the gospel ought to follow their example. And surely it is commendable for any people to be moral ; but they should beware lest they neglect the other important and essential duties of Christianity.

The deist, or moralist, may say, he has a full belief of the existence of a Supreme Being. To such a one the reply of St. James is applicable : " Thou believest there is one God ; thou doest well : the devils also believe and tremble." Yes, they do more ; they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the only possible medium of salvation for lost man.—Morality is essential to a Christian walk ; but a person may be moral and not be a follower of Christ—and not obtain salvation. What will it avail to honour and serve men, if we do not honour and serve our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ ? We should not only be moral, but godly ; and our chief study should be to know and do the will of our Father, which is in heaven. Unless we become reconciled to him, and be his servants through the light of the gospel and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, our death-bed will be anguish to our souls ; our entrance into the invisible world, terrour and dismay ; and eternity will only serve to render our existence most wretched.

3dly. *Intellectual attainments are entirely insufficient to secure the salvation of the soul.*

The acquisition of useful knowledge is both the privilege and the duty of man. And so far as any have opportunities of acquiring worthy attainments, they cannot neglect them without contracting guilt. Activity and improvement should appear manifest in the lives of those who are come to the years of understanding ; and should be a witness for them, to testify that they have cultivated their natural talents. Extensively varied are the situations, pursuits, and prospects of mankind ; but whatever be their talents or privileges, they are to improve them; or they

will fall under the reproof and condemnation of the idle and slothful servant. And we behold some whose minds are refined, their manners polished, and from their excellent attainments, their station elevated. They have extensive information in those things which respect the present life, which renders them agreeable and interesting companions, and useful members in society. The minds of some are well stored with a knowledge of the scriptures; and their reasonings concerning the important doctrines and duties of revelation, are forcible and conclusive. Such mental attainments are truly desirable, and demand suitable and seasonable attention. Still one thing may be lacking, which will render all essentially defective in the last decisive day.

A saving knowledge of the true God may be wanting, whom to know aright is life eternal. Other acquirements are far too short, compared with the one thing needful; and a covering infinitely too narrow for the soul, when contrasted with the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. They all dwindle into nothing, and appear mere vanity, in comparison with the love of God shed abroad in the heart. The Apostle Paul comes directly to the point, when he says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Then whatever we know, or do, if we have not been translated from the kingdom of sin and Satan into that of God's dear Son, and incited to walk in newness of life, we are no better than whitened sepulchres which are filled with all manner of impurity. Mankind may know much and do much, for which they are worthy of respect and

esteem among their fellow men, and yet be wholly destitute of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, or be able to stand in the day of final decision.

4thly. *The manifestation of much zeal in the things of religion, for a time, will not be sufficient to secure the everlasting rewards of the righteous.*

We sometimes behold persons who are all engagedness in the things of religion, and whose whole souls *apparently* are devoted to the cause of Christ. Their conversation and walk appear marked with zeal for the defence of truth; and like David, they may pray seven times a day. In the view of their devotedness and eminently pious lives, even old professors, who are persevering christians, are ashamed of themselves and their deficient performances.—But suppose such persons draw back, and forsake all their religious ways; and perhaps lead a life of evident insensibility—what shall we conclude respecting them? The Saviour has said concerning such, “No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.” However serious minded any person may be, and however animated may be his conduct in the things of religion, if he persevere not in the ways of well doing, he is essentially defective. His piety is far too short, and greatly straitened. Concerning every one that turneth back from attention to religious duties, the Lord declares, “My soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

The sacred scriptures do make mention of some, who draw back unto perdition. And from the parable concerning the way-side and stony ground hearers of the word, we are taught that some give attention to the things of religion for a while, whose hearts are never renewed by grace. And it is possible for such to go great lengths both in their feelings and in the externals of religion, and yet not be the children of God. Persons deceiving, or being themselves deceived, may engage in all

the outward forms of religion, as well as those who are the true disciples of Christ. Where a good work is begun in the heart, such a one's religion is not for a week, month, or year, but for life; yea, and for eternity. Hence we are taught, "He that persevereth unto the end, the same shall be saved." To forsake evil ways, is well; and to attend to external duties, is well. But the question, Whether we have passed from death unto life? is an infinitely important one. Unless this be the case, we are unprepared for a dying hour, and to enjoy the company of the blessed for eternity. Delusion, false religion, or a heated imagination, is temporal; and the end is uneasiness and distress. But true religion is peaceable, permanent and purifying; and its reward is glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. May our religion not be like the morning cloud and early dew, which soon pass away. May it be like that of the just, which groweth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day; and which will be perfected until the day of Jesus Christ!

REMARKS.

1st. *How vain our portion, if we embrace a false religion.*

What will it avail to be surrounded with friends and relatives, to be raised to eminence on account of abilities, and to be crowned with prosperity and affluence all our days, if we live without God and a well grounded hope in this world; and after death be wretched forever? If any one should gain the whole world, and lose his soul, would he be a gainer, or rather would he not be an infinite loser? Health and wealth, pleasure and honour, refinement and grandeur, are mere vanity and snares to our souls, if for the enjoyment of them, we be deceived respecting our immortal interests. Whatever may be our attainments or enjoyments, we are, according to the true import of the text, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, if we obtain

not the pearl of great price. Whatever we possess, if our hearts be not renewed by grace, and our sins pardoned through the blood of Christ, of all men we shall be the most miserable.

But mankind may be poor, be deprived of many of the comforts of life, and yet come short of durable riches, of a heavenly and eternal inheritance. Poverty or afflictions are of no avail as a substitute for genuine religion—they cannot give a title to heaven. Whether we possess or enjoy little or much of the good things of this life, unless Christ be formed in us the hope of glory, our portion must be with the nations that forget God.

2dly. Goodly are the prospects of those who are rich in faith, though destitute, and afflicted in this present state.

In the world to which they are going, sin, nor sorrow, nor sighing, shall ever enter; but joy and triumph will there for ever reign. What a consolation to the afflicted and distressed, who may entertain the cheering hope that death will for ever end their sorrows, and be the gate of their entrance into that happy place, where are joys unspeakable and full of glory! Do they now weep on the account of sin and the calamities of life? Shortly they will rejoice, and join the everlasting praises and anthems of the blessed. What a privilege, what an unspeakable blessing, that those who have a scanty portion here, a mere subsistence mingled with a few comforts, may have the Lord for their reconciled God, and heaven for their eternal home!

Suppose it is literally true concerning any one, that “the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it,” how happy for that man, if the moral or figurative import of the words be not applicable to him! Yes, and they who abound in every thing that is dear under the sun, if they set their affections on things above, will at last walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

If they use this world as not abusing it, the world above will be their everlasting portion.

3dly. *The gospel is suited to every circumstance in life.*

Are any of peculiarly tender feelings; and are they distrustful of themselves? The influence of the gospel would serve to establish their minds with christian fortitude; and render their faith firm, and their hopes in the Lord, strong. But are any pained with insensibility of affection, and with a sceptical mind? The grace and mercy of God are peculiarly calculated to fill their souls with contrition, and to awaken them to all that is endearing or interesting. Through the light of the gospel, the moralist may have all the moral virtues carried to their highest perfection, while he is made wise unto salvation. The profane and profligate will become moral and godly, and bless the Father of all mercies for all their comforts, if they hearken to the voice of wisdom. The intemperate will become sober-minded, and lead godly lives, if they resist not the light and power of the gospel. The wandering may be led into the right way; and the blind receive their sight, from the anointing with that eye salve which the gospel offers freely. Then let us not be deceived in concerns of the utmost importance, by fearing to come to the light, lest our deeds be reproved. Infinitely better to have our sins set in order continually before our eyes, while in time; that we, through the rich grace and mercy of God, may be delivered from them for eternity.

SERMON XVII.

JOSEPH'S AFFECTION, WORTHY OF IMITATION.

GENESIS XLV. 4.

I am Joseph, your brother.

THE history, with which these words are connected, is very curious and interesting; and the instruction afforded, is manifold and important. Human depravity, with some of its basest designs and most unnatural transactions, is delineated; and the nobleness of human uprightness is also recorded. While we behold the varied intentions and schemes of men, we are presented with a wonderful exhibition of the marvellous providence of God, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Let some of the facts with which this subject is connected, be noticed; and serve as an introduction to this discourse.—The term *Joseph*, is expressive of increase or addition. “And when God remembered Rachel, that she bare a son, she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son.” That son was Benjamin, or son of the right hand. “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age.” Joseph and Benjamin were both loved with peculiar affection by their father; for they were the sons of his beloved wife, Rachel. It appears that Joseph was a person of remarkable natural talents, of singular beauty and piety; and doubtless these endeared him yet more to his father, who made him a coat of many colours. For this, and his dreams, his brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

This is the relation of the first dream of Joseph to his brethren : “ Behold we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? and they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.” And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren : “ Behold, the sun and the moon, and the eleven stars, made obeisance to me. And his father rebuked him, and said, Shall I and thy mother, and thy brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth ? And his brethren envied him, but his father observed the saying.”—From the event, it appears that their interrogations were the right interpretation of the dreams, of which they had some apprehension, especially the father. Shortly his brethren devise to slay him. Reuben, in order to save his life, advises to cast him into a pit ; but Judah persuaded them to sell him to the Ishmaelites ; and the latter sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. The coat of many colours is dipped in the blood of a kid, and presented to the aged father, a sad spectacle. But the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man ; and the Lord made all that he did, to prosper in his hand. He escaped the snare of a treacherous mistress, that he sinned not against his master nor his God, though his innocence was the occasion of his being cast into prison.

Now they call upon Joseph to interpret the dream of the chief butler. In his dream there appeared three branches on a vine, which budded, shot forth blossoms, and brought forth clusters of ripe grapes. Says Joseph, The three branches are three days, and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh’s cup into his hand after the former manner. The chief baker’s dream was three white baskets on his head, with all manner of bake meats for Pharaoh, but

the birds did eat them. The interpretation was, that after three days he should be hung on a tree.

At the end of two full years, Pharaoh had two dreams, or his two-fold dream. The first was the seven well-favoured kine, and fat-fleshed; and the seven ill-favoured and lean-fleshed kine, which ate up the former. The second, was the seven ears of corn on one stalk, rank and good, which were devoured by the seven thin ears, blasted with the east wind. When none of the magicians and wise men of Egypt could interpret this dream for the king, Joseph answered, "What God is about to do, he sheweth unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty, throughout all the land of Egypt; and there shall arise after them seven years of famine, which shall consume the land."

Now let us notice Joseph's exaltation. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had." But mark! The famine was sore in all lands, after the expiration of the seven years of plenty. Joseph's brethren must go from the land of Canaan down to Egypt, to buy corn of him that they may live and not die. Joseph knew them, but they knew not him. He was only seventeen years of age, when sold into Egypt, and now he is about thirty-eight, an absence of twenty-one years.

The scene now changes, and Joseph's dreams begin to be fulfilled. He uses various methods to prove his brethren; to bring them to a proper sense of their own guilt, and to discover how they were affected toward his brother Benjamin. He accosts them as spies; and so orders that they appear to have treated him most ungratefully. They are brought into such a situation, that they cannot make

it appear but that they have stolen ; for the silver cup is found with them. At this crisis of the trial, Joseph evidently perceived that confusion and terror were likely to predominate, and to fill them with apprehension, that he would now avenge the injustice and cruelty of which they appear to have been guilty.

When Judah made his pathetick address and affecting plea for the release of Benjamin, Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him ; and he cried, “ Cause every man to go out from me ; and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, *I am Joseph, doth my father yet live ?* And his brethren could not answer him ; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, *Come near to me, I pray you ;* and they came near ; and he said, *I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold.*”

The mention of Joseph’s name would probably have led his brethren to a recollection of his features and voice ; but to remind them of their selling him, would more effectually remove all doubts of his being their brother ; and this was necessary to introduce the kind attempt he intended to make to obviate their fears, and to inspire confidence and comfort. How seasonable, how encouraging and excellent, this simple expression—*I am Joseph, your brother !* It flowed from a principle of natural affection ; from a feeling and generous breast ; and from a noble soul influenced by the principle of true religion. By other persons, or by other means, without such an expression of the tongue, this same truth could easily have been made known. But if these words were fitly spoken, let them be applied to the practical purposes of life and religion, while we notice other relations, times, and circumstances, when similar ones would be seasonable.

As it respects the various relations of human beings, an encouraging conversation is very desirable and highly important. It is a common proverb, that actions speak louder than words. The true import of this proposition is, that unless our conduct correspond with our expressions, there are inconsistency and deceit. But let our daily deportment be such as becometh human beings, and then suitable expressions of the tongue, are the spring of life. As the term Joseph imports increase or addition, so acceptable words will increase human happiness, and do honour to human beings.

Let the conjugal relation be first noticed.

A man who provides well for his own household, and is kind to his wife, may be called a good husband. But, if in addition to these, there daily flow from his lips an affectionate, instructive, and animating conversation, still more highly favoured must be the companion of his bosom. How much may the cares and pains of a woman be lessened, her sorrows soothed, and heart cheered, by timely and consoling expressions ! While some are pleased with the simple and frank acknowledgement of a husband's attachment, others are gratified with occasional insinuations, from which the same may be inferred. How many and how varied are the opportunities in the journey of the conjugal life, when a pleasing deportment, kind speech, or comforting word, would greatly promote a woman's happiness ! Then let them not be withheld ; but in due season administered to divide the sorrows, and double the joys of her life. Let the deportment and conversation of a husband be such towards his wife in this respect, that he emulate her to repay abundantly the same kindness, by seeking to imitate his excellent example. And surely a faithful and affectionate woman will not be slack to recompense her corresponding obligations. Says Solomon, concerning such a one, " She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness." With

the same view he adds, “ Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.” And truly a virtuous woman of modest deportment, of chaste and animating conversation, is of much value, and cannot but be prized very highly by every sensible and worthy man. And how desirable, suitable, and important, is a reciprocal and interesting conversation, in the conjugal state !

Let us mark the manifestation of filial affection in the expression closely connected with the text. “ Doth my father yet live ?” The aged patriarch is first in his thoughts and cares. How affectionate, and dutiful the interrogation ! He was elevated high in power, but not elated with pride above his relation to the old sage, from whom he descended. He could neither despise the infirmities, nor neglect the necessities of his aged parents. Hear his instruction to his brethren. “ Haste ye, go up to my father, and say to him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me Lord over all Egypt. Come down unto me ; tarry not. Thou shalt dwell near to me, and I will nourish thee.” What a beloved, what a noble son !

The parental relation is an important one in this respect ; for much do the comfort, disposition, and manners of children depend on the words or addresses of their parents. They are entitled to much encouragement for well doing, and to the most endearing expressions of parental affection. And the tendency is cheerfulness of mind, mental improvement, and religious impressions.

In a family circle of brothers and sisters, how suitable and applicable the expression, “ I am Joseph, your brother.” That is, we have the same parent for our father, and I am the same kind and friendly person towards you as when formerly in our father’s family. Change and reverse in our circumstances, have not affected me as your enemy. It is proper and suitable that they who are friends, should manifest themselves as such, not only by

deeds, but also by words. Some persons have the happy talent, by delicate insinuations of such a nature, of gaining the good will of others, and of continuing friendship. Do we esteem such ? and shall we not seek to imitate their pleasing and worthy example ? How affectionate ! what honour has Joseph done himself ! what kindness and generosity towards his brethren, in the few words of the text ! Then may we, in the varied relations and circumstances of life, bear this example in mind ; may our speech be well ordered, and a talent so important be wisely improved.

2dly. *A word concerning the manner of reproof.*

We should be careful to observe suitable times and opportunities to remind those of their evil, who may have injured us, or have had evil intentions to do us an injury. How seasonable, friendly, and faithful the conduct of Joseph, when he says, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." This expression is well calculated to bring their sin to remembrance, and it was proper they should be thus reproved and humbled. A brother ! yet base, treacherous brethren, you sold me, and that into a foreign land. Your conduct was most unnatural and abominable in the sight both of God and man.

Manifold are the offences and injuries of this present state. In certain seasons and circumstances to remind others of their faults, would only increase the difficulty. But still, reproof is necessary when wisdom and faithfulness evince the duty. There is a time suitable to rebuke and reprove, as well as to encourage and commend. Joseph is now governour over Egypt, and in the height of prosperity. Yet no thanks to his brethren that he is not there a slave, daily groaning under oppressive bondage. He is now a lord, and most highly esteemed of a nation ; but they were base enough to have had him for ever deprived of liberty and honour.

Similar conduct has been manifested among mankind in ten thousand instances and ways. How

many have used all their subtlety and power to injure the person, the character, and the property of others, against whom they have been opposed, on account of some unreasonable prejudice! And, if they have not effected their overthrow, or been the instrument of some wide spread and lasting injury, it is not for the want of shameful intentions, nor base exertions. Perhaps they afterwards see a person, whose ruin they have sought, very prosperous and much esteemed. If their passions or prejudices shall have subsided, and they have some just sense of their criminality, they doubtless will have views and feelings somewhat similar to those of Joseph's brethren. But time, place, and circumstances should be observed, would any remind them of their evil conduct, and make them ashamed and penitent for what they have done. If any would reprove others, or tell them of their faults in faithfulness, and for their good, they should do it with a benevolent spirit and with wisdom, as did Joseph. Says Solomon, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." It is very important, that words of reproof be fitly spoken, to answer some wise and salutary purpose. With decision, faithfulness, and meekness, may we learn to inform our fellow mortals of the error of their ways.

3dly. *Mankind may speak of their prosperity, when they would bring to view the goodness of God, or console their fellow mortals.*

When, through the smiles of Providence, any have attained the varied blessings of life, it is proper, at certain times, for them to mention to their friends, how the Lord has prospered them. It is neither for the benefit, nor is it the duty of man, to be always speaking of his misfortunes. Prosperity has a claim to a portion of his words, as well as adversity. To be frequently mourning or repining at the allotments of Providence, as is the manner of some, is certainly sinful. And a person may

speak of his enjoyments and success, in the language of boasting instead of gratitude and thankfulness. To show the vanity and impiety of such conversation, let us notice the expressions, and from these, view the spirit, of the king of Babylon, who is called Nebuchadnezzar. As he was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, the king spoke and said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?"

From such an air, views, and language, every sensible and pious man cannot but wish to be delivered. The spirit and manner of Joseph will appear a most beautiful contrast. While he mentions his prosperity and honour, meekness and gratitude are apparent. The goodness of God and the consolation of his afflicted father, are most conspicuous in the words of his speech. To his troubled brethren he says, "God sent me before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." How do humanity, and a sense of entire dependance on God for all the blessings of life, shine forth in this address! Joseph was indeed highly exalted, but his heart was not elated with pride in the height of his prosperity. Let his example then be proposed for imitation. When abounding in the good things of life, let the manner and history of Joseph have their proper influence.

4thly. *The history of Joseph may enlarge our views as to the important duty of forgiveness.*

Joseph was of a forgiving spirit, and when he had sufficiently tried and proved his brethren, he was ready for a reconciliation. He had recourse to various expedients to bring them to a sense of their wickedness, to humble them, and excite re-

pentance for their sin, before he expressed forgiveness. He possessed a forgiving temper during the whole course of trial; but, before he would exclaim, "I am Joseph, your brother," he must have evidence of their compunction and abasement. When he saw that they were sufficiently humbled, and about to be overwhelmed with grief on the account of their aggravated sin, he addresses them with words of consolation. "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life."

The conduct of Joseph towards his brethren, in this respect, is godlike, and an excellent pattern for our imitation. The Lord is a gracious and merciful God, abundant in compassion; but he never has, and never will, pardon any who have rebelled against him, before they are brought to true evangelical repentance. In like manner is the duty of forgiveness inculcated upon mankind in the holy scriptures. If others have trespassed against us, and they confess their faults, or exhibit evidence of genuine repentance, they are to be forgiven. Even against our enemies we are not to cherish a spirit of enmity and revenge, but a friendly and forgiving temper. Some injuries do, indeed, demand reparation, but where true penitence is, there is also always a disposition to make restitution. Even the sacred volume does not demand the expression of forgiveness, till there be confession of fault, or a manifestation of sorrow for the wrong. When we are required to forgive our enemies, the true import is, that we should exercise a forgiving and not a revengeful disposition, that if they exhibit repentance, we should put forth the act of forgiveness. As we would hope to obtain the pardon of our sins from God, when we confess and forsake them, so we should be ready to do towards our enemies; and more than this, certainly is not required. The Lord is pleased to see penitent, returning prodigals, and such only does he forgive. So we should

heartily desire to have our enemies, even those who may have greatly injured us, become at peace, be reconciled; and when they manifest a spirit of penitence, we should exhibit the spirit of the gospel, a spirit of forgiveness.

5thly. *The subject should inspire humility.*

Joseph was now governour of Egypt, intrusted with its richest treasures, and distinguished by its highest honours. He was arrayed in silken robes, wore on his hand the royal signet, and around his neck hung a golden chain. He rode in the king's second chariot, and the heralds proclaimed, "Bow the knee before him." He indeed governed the people with undisputed authority; but this governour ruled himself. He remembered, that he was Joseph, a Hebrew—the son of an old pilgrim, who now sojourned in Canaan, and the brother of these plain strangers, who were depending on his compassion and soliciting his clemency.

How amiable is humility, especially in those whom Providence has distinguished by office, wealth, and power. To Joseph, this virtue was a brighter ornament than the royal adornings of the signet, the chain, and the robe. It was the meekness of his spirit, not the trappings of his regal dignity, which embalmed his memory, by transmitting his name with honour to the most distant ages. Though he wore the badges of the highest power of courts, they appear like mere trifling toys, compared with that almost concealed, brilliant, durable gem, *humility*.

We are very strikingly taught, that God can raise to eminent stations the lowest of the sons of men, and use a feeble mortal as an instrument to effect the grand purposes of his goodness. We see Joseph, the lad whom his brethren had doomed to death, or perpetual slavery, employed as Heaven's agent in the transactions of concerns and events truly singular and momentous. Hence, though dead, his conduct on the divine record, ad-

dresses us in a living language of imperishable characters, and says, "O man in the height of human glory, be humble."

6thly. *How adorable the righteousness and mercy of God!*

Whatever excellent or amiable natural talents any possess, they must experience a vital change, or they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. However engaging or pleasing the manners of some may be in the view of men, without that repentance which is unto life, they must perish. All the honours, the enjoyments, and the esteem of this world, can neither purchase nor procure that honour which cometh from God.

On the other hand, if sin shall have polluted the soul like that of a Manesseh, or Mary Magdalene, and it be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, it will triumph with seraphs in eternal life. Neither the number nor the magnitude of our sins will exclude us from immortal bliss, if we have repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the adoring grace and mercy of God, by godly sorrow and repentance unto salvation, some of the greatest sinners and vilest wretches that have ever lived, have been received to heavenly mansions, to sing for ever the glorious songs of redeeming love. Hence, to every penitent believing soul, the language of its Maker is, I am thy reconciled God, thy everlasting inheritance, and eternal glorious recompence of reward. But unless the heart be renewed by grace, there can be no qualifications to prepare for heaven; nothing that can render it consistent for our only God and Saviour to pardon our sins, to make intercession for us at the supreme court of the universe, and crown us as conquerours with those imperishable, divine gems, which grow brighter and brighter for eternity.

SERMON XVIII.

ON GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS IV. 30.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.

THE sacred oracles of divine truth alone unfold the existence of God in the persons of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and point out the particular office which each person sustains in the completion of the divine works. And they teach us, that the official work of the Father is to be the Creator of all things, and to give laws to all worlds, though not independently of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The peculiar, official work of the Son is to make atonement for sin by his sufferings and death, that he may be the Redeemer of sinners. The Divine Spirit has the office of sanctifier; hence he convinces mankind of their guilt and wretchedness, and seals the benefits of redemption. The consequence must be, that some of the sins of mankind are committed more directly against one of the persons in the Godhead than another. Sin in general, or the violation of the moral law of God, is an offence more particularly against the person of the Father. To despise the way of salvation as made known in the gospel through Jesus Christ, is a sin more directly pointed against the person of the Son. But to resist that voice which calls for the application of the purchased redemption, is more peculiarly to sin against the person of the Holy Ghost. In this view we are addressed in the exhortation—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

To illustrate this subject, I shall mention some of the ways by which the Holy Spirit is grieved, and then consider the consequences.

1st. *Mankind grieve the Holy Spirit of God, when they strive to quench his awakening influence in the convictions of conscience.*

When the light of divine truth shines into the minds of men in an unrenewed state, and illuminates their darkened understandings, the Holy Spirit with beams of a heavenly ray enlightens conscience, which discovers their sinful state and wretched condition. They are now convinced of being sinners against a holy and just God, who, as his word declares, is angry with the wicked every day. The natural consequence is, that alarming fears are excited, which fill the soul with painful anxiety. In this state of conscious guilt and alarm some arise and call upon God, if peradventure they may obtain mercy, and their sins be forgiven them; but others exert all the energies of their minds, in devising means to banish their convictions.

The official work of the Holy Spirit in the great plan of salvation, is to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. And impenitent sinners are sometimes so convicted, that they are constrained to see themselves as wretched, and without excuse before God. They now and then feel, that their own righteousness is no better than a refuge of lies; and that without the righteousness of Christ, they must perish as miserable sinners. An enlightened conscience does at times bring eternal realities near, and cause even a Felix to tremble in view of his exposure to the wrath of God. Divine truth is sometimes set home forcibly upon the consciences of men in opposition to their utmost efforts; but whether the effects of the truth impressed, be continued, or withdrawn, often depends upon their agency, either in cherishing or resisting them.

He is the Spirit of grace and unbounded love, that strives with mankind; and in the most tender mercy

and abundant compassion does he arouse them from their spiritual and deadly slumbers. Even the most pungent convictions are effects wrought by a benevolent and gracious Spirit, that the soul may be delivered from sin and death. How affecting then that any should resist his enlightening operations, as they would the fatal delusions of an invisible enemy! Shall he descend to visit men in benevolence and mercy? and shall they account and treat him as their opposer and destroyer? Shall the warnings and entreaties of an earthly friend excite to flee from temporal danger? But shall the solicitations of the divine and heavenly messenger not be regarded, that we may escape eternal ruin? Solemn, affectionate, and gracious, are his operations on the minds and consciences, even of a world lying in wickedness. His official work in the great scheme of redemption, is to persuade men to repent, and be reconciled to God, and make them interested in all the glorious promises and unspeakable blessings of the gospel. Then they who strive to quench his awakening influence in the convictions of conscience, do resist and grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

2dly. *When mankind make earthly comforts their chief joy, they grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*

The good things of this life ought to be received with gratitude and thankfulness; but spiritual blessings should be accounted the delight of the soul. It is the privilege of man to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of his labour. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit would have the soul feast on angel's food—eat heavenly manna. He invites to partake of that bread of life, which came down from heaven, and to drink of the water of the river of life. But when earthly good things, which perish in the using, are received as more valuable than that meat, which endureth unto everlasting life, the Holy Spirit, the author of spiritual and eternal blessings is dishonoured and grieved.

The light of the natural sun, and the beauties of

nature should delight and cheer the mind. But the Sun of Righteousness and the glories of divine revelation with their brighter lustre, should enkindle more intense delight. Friends and relatives, the sweets of social life, and other blessings of society, are endearments which should be highly prized. But the fellowship of the Father and his Son, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, should be preferred as our supreme joy. As it is the part of wisdom to esteem all things according to their real worth, or comparative excellence ; so those blessings, which are eternal, are incomparably more valuable than any of those which are temporal. Hence the divine Spirit would have mankind use all blessings beneath the sun as streams to draw them to the fountain and source of all good. He counsels them to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. But, if they make earthly comforts their chief joy, they grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

3dly. *The Holy Spirit is grieved, when any neglect the means of grace.*

His official work in the salvation of mankind, in the present age, is not to make any new revelation, but to apply the truth already revealed. And this he does not in a miraculous manner, nor by physical force ; but by the use of means, and a moral agency. God's dominion in the natural world, and material universe, is affected by his almighty power, according to the principle of natural or material laws. But his government over his intelligent creatures, is administered by moral laws, holding forth rewards and punishments as motives to induce to obedience. When the Spirit of God is said to have moved upon the waters, the natural government or the almighty power of God, was exerted ; but when the Holy Spirit is represented as striving with men, his moral agency is brought to view, exhibiting motives, and operating by a powerful, persuasive influence. The dispensation of the gospel, as

it respects either saints or sinners, is that of a gracious system of means, and of moral agency, both human and divine, both common and special. There is an essential difference in the operation of the power and agency of God as exerted in the raising of Lazarus from the grave, and his renewing the heart of a sinner, wholly destitute of the life of holiness. The one is a dead body, and can be raised by supernatural, almighty power only. The other is a living soul, though dead in trespasses and sins; and must itself change, whilst it is changed. Both the nature of God's agency, and that of the life produced, are essentially different.

Let us now attend to the injunction—"Compel them to come." We are to understand by this, that some have so hardened their hearts, by resisting the truth, that the disciples of Christ must redouble their efforts, and exhibit the life and power of the gospel so clearly and forcibly, as to constrain them to see its beauty, and partake of its rich provision. Sinners, who have long withheld the means of grace, must be very pungently affected for a saving change to be wrought in their hearts. The operations of the Holy Spirit must be much more powerful, as it respects the use of means, to convert an aged, stiff-necked, gospel sinner, than those which would excite a child or youth to give up all for Christ.

In the great work of conversion, the Holy Spirit presses upon the conscience and heart of the sinner both the law and the gospel, exhibiting the most holy nature of the Divine character, and his own pollution; presenting his guilt and wretchedness, and at the same time the all-sufficiency of the Saviour so clearly and fully, that he can no longer fight against God, but throws down his weapons of rebellion, and is sweetly constrained to repent and embrace the gospel. Old things are now passed away; all things are become new, for by the Holy Spirit of God he is created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.

The means by which mankind are awakened to a sense of their exceeding sinfulness, and of the holy nature of God, are various ; but the Holy Spirit is the sole agent, which effectually applies to the conscience and heart either the providence, or the word of God. Some are most deeply affected in view of the death of a fellow mortal ; some, by a pungent sermon, and others, by a simple and striking remark made in common religious conversation. But they who neglect the appointed means of grace, practically despise the official work of the Holy Spirit, and neglect their own salvation. In making light of the ordinances of the gospel, they make light of the great agent, who alone can render them efficient to their spiritual and everlasting welfare. Yes, reader, or hearer, if you hope for salvation, and are not found in the way appointed, you are sinning presumptuously against the Spirit, the Comforter. And it is evident, that all those who daily neglect the means of grace, are constantly grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

4thly. *The Holy Spirit is grieved, when mankind misapply the promises of the Gospel.*

The sacred scriptures do abound with very precious promises ; and mankind are sometimes deceived, by applying these to themselves without any just ground. To those who have experienced the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit they become yea and amen ! But they, who habitually resist and grieve him, are not interested in his consolations, nor in the promised blessings of the gospel. It is written, “Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.” But these graces are not the plants of nature ; they are the fruit of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Hence the promises annexed cannot in truth be applied to those who walk in the paths of disobedience. They

who apply the promises of the gospel to themselves, to whom its threatenings belong, rest on a false, and not on a well grounded hope, and are building on a sandy foundation. Satan, who seekth only the ruin of the soul, is rejoiced in such fatal delusions. But the Holy Spirit of grace, and truth, and salvation, is grieved, when God is thus dishonoured, and mankind deluded, by misapplying the promises of the gospel.

5thly. *Believers grieve the Holy Spirit of God, when they distrust the divine promises.*

The exhortation in the text was addressed to the followers of Christ. When a friend offends, or treats us with disrespect, the term, grief, becomes emphatical. So when we consider the Saviour as liable to be wounded in the house of his friends, how forcible this expostulation of the Apostle Paul to his brethren of the Ephesians—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

It is the privilege of those who are heirs of an inheritance above, to plead the gracious promises of the gospel, and to participate in its unspeakable blessings. And in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, we have the record, that a number of ancient worthies through faith did embrace them, and obtain peculiarly distinguished blessings from heaven. How is it for the honour of Zion, that believers, through their pilgrimage state, walk by faith, and not by sight, manifesting to the world the power and excellence of the gospel! With holy confidence then let them make their addresses to the throne of divine grace, and plead the promises and faithfulness of a covenant keeping God. Instead of saying, where is the promise of his coming, let them pray in faith, that the Lord would speedily build up Jerusalem, his chief joy.

Abraham believed against hope, and obtained a blessing. That is, he believed steadfastly in the truth and faithfulness of the divine promise, although to

human view, prospects were discouraging, apparently against him.

The prophet Habakkuk breaks forth in the following beautiful and animated strain: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The psalmist, in his devotions, makes use of similar figurative and encouraging expressions. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Such are the proper and pious exclamations of believers in time of affliction, even whilst under the chastening rod of their heavenly Father. But they who distrust the divine promises, do grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

6thly. *The Holy Spirit is grieved, when believers trust in the means of grace for spiritual comfort, and not in the divine agency and grace of God.*

As mankind are naturally prone to idolatry, so the renewed soul is liable to confide in the privileges of grace and salvation, and not in their author and finisher. Young converts are apt to rely much on certain means as ensuring a blessing, and nothing but frequent disappointment, and painful experience, will teach them to trust solely to the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, to render them effectual for present joy, and their eternal salvation. Persons who have been awakened, or converted, under the ministration of the word, are ready to conclude, that should they again hear discourses from the same preacher, they would cer-

tainly enjoy much of the presence and blessing of God. But from experience they are taught, that neither a godly minister nor an interesting discourse will avail for their spiritual growth, unless the Holy Spirit accompany the word spoken, and seal instruction to their minds. Some do even imagine, that should they only be in the same seat in which they have often been seriously impressed and animated, it would secure a blessing. Yea, even the closet, though greatly neglected by many, may be idolized. But such do not effectually consider, "Though Paul may plant, and Apollos water, it is God who giveth the increase." Instead of looking away through all mediums to the great Giver, they pay divine homage to his gifts. Thus they grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by substituting means as an equivalent to his divine agency. Hence, says the soul, "By night on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets and in the broad ways; I will seek him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not." And why? Believers must be taught to realize that there is a divine efficiency, when the privileges of the gospel prove a medium of spiritual blessings. So when they trust in the means of grace themselves for spiritual comfort, they grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Let us attend, *in the second place*, to the consequences of grieving the Holy Spirit.

1st. *Impenitent sinners, by resisting his awaking and convicting operations, oppose the only possible efficient agency of their conversion and salvation.*

As the blood of Christ is the only ground of pardon for rebels against God, so the Holy Spirit is the sole agent to make any willing in the day of his power to repent and believe the gospel. And he may be resisted and grieved, till he withdraw finally, and a person be given over to a reprobate

mind. There is a point beyond which he never returns; but the Lord says, my Spirit shall no more strive with him. In vain, then, are any means, for the case is hopeless, when the soul is given over to its own devices.

Some do indeed make light of the most affecting movings, and the most solemn warnings of the Holy Spirit; but they trifle with the great gift of gifts. His calls to the sons of men are the last efforts, the utmost exertions of the unbounded grace, the adoring mercy, and astonishing forbearance of God in behalf of their precious, perishing, immortal souls. When finally forsaken of him, the terms, grace and mercy, can no more be endearing names to them. Hence the injunction, "Quench not the Spirit," is of momentous weight.

The grace of God may have limits, as it relates to individual sinners. And when the Divine Spirit affects them less and less by his operations, difficulties are more and more increased, and greater obstacles thrown in the way of his blessing the truth through means to their conversion. Yet, sinner, how often hast thou insultingly replied to him, "Go thy way for this time!" And what if he should leave you wholly to yourself? When it is said concerning any one, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but the mists of the blackness of darkness for ever. And O! wretched state, dread condition, to be utterly forsaken and abandoned of the Holy Spirit of God! How careful should mankind be not to resist and grieve him, lest unawares they be given over to final delusion, and certain destruction.

2dly. When believers grieve the Holy Spirit of God, they have leanness sent into their souls.

When they disregard the voice of the heavenly messenger, they dry up those comforts, which are the springs of their life, and their chief joy. For them to disobey him, is to extinguish the vital ener-

gies of their souls ; and with their own hands to smother the light of their lamps. Do we sometimes behold a believer as a barren fig-tree, apparently cumbering the ground, and would we know the reason ? It is, that he has so grieved the Holy Spirit of God, whereby he is sealed to the day of redemption. He has sapped the spring of all his joys, and rendered the heavens as brass over his head. Now the mildews of the evening, and the chill dews of the morning, nip the bud, and blight the prospect of heavenly fruit. Divine solace is withdrawn ; and earth appears a barren wilderness. A dreary night ensues ; and chilling frosts benumb the soul. Yea, the light of day is exchanged for the tangible darkness of Egypt. The Christian graces wither, and seem without life ; whilst unfaithfulness, distrust, and perhaps despair, rise up in their stead. The soul of the believer is then chastened of the Lord; and must continue to experience the rod, till the Holy Spirit cause it to return. In such a state the tempter is vigilant, in hurling his fiery darts ; and though he cannot destroy, he can worry and annoy. In bitterness and agony of soul the believer in the dust, as the Saviour on the cross, is constrained to exclaim, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" And although darkness may endure but for a night ; yet how often is the anxious inquiry made, Lord, is thy mercy clean gone for ever ? Under a scorching sun and for the want of timely rain, we sometimes see the plants and the leaves of the trees shrivel and droop, till there is no form nor comeliness in them. So the believer, who grieves the Holy Spirit of God, and who for a time, is denied his vivifying influence, becomes unfruitful ; and instead of enjoying a feast of fat things, has leanness sent into his soul.

3dly. When believers grieve the Holy Spirit of God, they give occasion to the enemy to triumph.

Watchfulness and vigilance prove a shield against

the temptations and wiles of the adversary ; but to be unfaithful is to quit the field, and at once to grant the victory. The Christian warfare cannot be successfully maintained without sanctifying influences from on high ; and when the great agent of divine influence is withdrawn, the enemy cometh in like a flood. It is the sword of the Spirit, which enables the believer to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked ; and, unless he wield this heavenly and divine weapon, he is constantly liable to be taken captive. Satan is rejoiced, when the Holy Spirit is grieved ; for he then expects victory, conscious that means are not effectual against his stratagems. So let believers take heed, and beware, lest they give occasion to the enemy so triumph.

4thly. *For believers to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, is to put stumbling blocks before the world, and to be in the way of the salvation of souls.*

When the disciples of Christ, by their lives and conversation, do strikingly reflect the light and glory of the gospel, sinners are constrained to come to him, that they may have life. But when they forsake their first love ; when they scarcely exhibit the form of godliness, and not its power, then the prospect of the enlargement of Zion by the addition of converts, is gloomy indeed. If believers do not enjoy the cheering and animating influences of the Spirit of grace, how small the encouragement, that they shall be the happy instruments of the conversion and salvation of any of their fellow-men. Through their lukewarmness and chilling influence, the kingdom of Satan may be advanced, instead of the kingdom of God's dear Son. If their zealous and godly lives may prove instrumental for the salvation of souls ; then their inactivity and indifference in the things of religion, may be the occasion why some are lost, and not saved. This must be true, or the blood of souls would not be required in consequence of unfaithfulness.

How affecting and solemn the thought, that if

believers would be faithful, and abound in all Christian duties, they would prove a savour of life unto life to some ; whereas, by criminal neglect, they may become a savour of death unto death. And can you, Christian friends, endure the thought, that one soul should be lost through your neglect ? Can you with indifference behold the impenitent, thronging the road to ruin, and stumbling over your backslidings ? Yes, if you are not enlivened by the Spirit of Christ, you can. But since he is the great, efficient agent for the conversion, sanctification and salvation of lost man ; and for these things he is to be inquired of by the house of Israel, how careful should believers be, lest they grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and instead of being a light to the world, be a hinderance and effectual barriers to those, who otherwise would enter into the kingdom of heaven.

REMARKS.

1st. *Impenitent sinners have reason for mourning, when they behold the professors of religion in a backslidden state.*

When the members of any church do generally grieve the Holy Spirit of God, the prospect of a general awakening in that place is truly darkened. The contentions and misdoings of believers are not only ground for their own deep humiliation ; but they should cause those to mourn, who have never professed, nor embraced the gospel. Would the impenitent not oppose their own salvation ? Let them not resist and grieve the spirit themselves : let them repent, and desire also, that the friends of the Redeemer enjoy much of his life-giving influence. Then a life of prayer and devotedness to God will be manifest ; yea, they will wrestle in prayer for a divine blessing, till the Lord pour out his Spirit, and build up his church by the addition of numerous converts. Yes, they who have never experienced the joys of believing, have a deep interest

in this subject, and particularly in the peace, harmony, and engagedness of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Let not the world, at any time, rejoice in the low estate of the church, as it respects either her numbers, or her graces. Impenitent sinners, you should rather weep for yourselves, be afflicted, and mourn in the bitterness of your souls, when few come to the solemn feasts of Zion, and the love of many waxes cold.

2dly. *How should there be one heart and one voice that the Lord would quicken his people and build up Jerusalem!*

This would be for the joy and prosperity of believers, and for the furtherance of the gospel. If, with an audible voice from heaven, the interrogation should be made to us, "Can these dry bones live?" We might answer as did the prophet, "O Lord God, thou knowest." Unless the Holy Spirit give life, we might add, they must remain in spiritual death. Unless the Lord from on high breathe on them, they never can live.

Then let it be our united petition for the Holy Spirit to be poured out yet more copiously into our own hearts, that we may live near to God. Let our kindred and friends, the church and the world, be remembered in our daily and fervent supplications. Are we now mourning with deep contrition, some past neglects, or grievous offences? Then may we double our watchfulness and diligence; and give up our hearts to be guided by the Spirit of grace and truth. He is the Spirit of life; and through his influence we may bid defiance to the fiends of darkness. To this end may our united petition be, Lord evermore give us of this spirit, and let us drink of the water of the river of life, that we may never thirst. Give heed to the kind exhortation, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

SERMON XIX.

NEGLECT OF PRESENT DUTY THE RUIN OF MAN.

1 KINGS XX. 40.

As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.

VARIOUS and deeply interesting are the instructions of the sacred oracles. The revelation which God has given, is both glorious and worthy its author, and suited to the condition of mankind. On the one hand, the divine character is exhibited in all its glory and beauty ; on the other, that of man in all its pollution and deformity. The great design of divine revelation is the glory of God, and the salvation of man. But, in order to this, we may see the propriety of those facts being recorded of the conduct both of good and bad men ; of the faithful and unfaithful, and all their varied circumstances, to be a terroir to evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. Hence, a passage of scripture seemingly indifferent in itself, by its connexion becomes momentously interesting.

The words of the text are the account of a man's negligence, which cost his life. The connexion is solemn and instructive. " And a certain man of the sons of the prophets, said unto his neighbour in the word of the Lord, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. Then said he unto him, because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord, Behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him and slew him. Then he found another man, and said,

Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him. So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king; and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a man turned aside and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man; if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be, thyselv hast decided it. And he hasted and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel dis- cerned him, that he was of the prophets. And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people."

By this account we are taught, that to be busy about remote concerns, to the neglect of immediate duty, proves the destruction of man. The subject may be illustrated with great variety for our present and future well-being.

1st. *The common calamities of idleness.*

As it respects the various evils of civil life, the true reason to be assigned is, that mankind are so much busied in concerns remote from their present duty. Society is burdened by manifold evils, because so many are busy here and there; and for the greater part of their time, and the chief part of their conduct, no satisfactory account can be given. Mankind are generally busied about something; and if it be not for good, it must be for evil. Those pursuits which cannot be for the benefit of individuals and the community, must be for their injury. And to turn aside but one step from what is consistent with known duty, is to enter a course which may end in lasting disgrace and

infamy. When the mind is not employed with subjects which relate to immediate duty, a person is peculiarly exposed to temptation. To be busy here and there, by spending much of our time in loitering or frivolous pursuits, is to be in danger of some destructive vice; of intemperance, profanity, theft, or lasciviousness, and to an unfeeling mind, and abandoned life. Would all be occupied in some of the varied duties of life, how quickly would bitter animosities, and painful and lasting contentions have an end! Why are our prisons filled with malefactors? Because many are busy here and there, contemplating schemes to which duty does not call, and inventing projects which are not their true interest. Forgery and robbery so often take place on the account of some who would be busy, but not in some honest calling. Why are locks necessary? For fear that some would be busy here and there, from motives foreign from present duty. The same reasoning will account for the conduct of duelists.

Would the person under the gallows assign the true reason how he came to ascend the scaffold to be a spectacle for the world, he would tell us he first embarked in some trivial pursuits, aside from the path of duty; and, persisting in this course by a climax of vices, he is suspended between the heavens and the earth. Murder, at first, was far from his intentions: his soul even shuddered at the thought of a profligate life, and of abandoned and desperate attempts. How varied the vices and evils of this present world! But to be busy about remote concerns to the neglect of immediate duty, proves the destruction of man in his present state, as it respects the various evils of civil life.

2dly. *Destitution of earthly comforts.*

Negligence and trivial pursuits, instead of industry and economy, cause many to live in the want of the conveniences of life. Earthly good things must not be accounted our chief portion, as they

are only the temporal blessings of heaven. Still no person of reflection can be insensible how desirable and necessary they are in this life, both for usefulness and comfort. Although they are only temporal gifts, yet they are essential for our subsistence and for the support of society. Hence, we are not only to desire them, but to labour, and by all prudent means endeavour to procure them. In time of health, property is desirable, that we may have a competence, bear our part in the support of religious institutions, and contribute to the support of the poor and needy, and to the necessities of the sick and distressed. And how culpable must that person be, who by idleness or prodigality, has rendered himself unable to discharge such offices of humanity! Sin lieth at the door of him who will be busy here and there, in pursuits remote and inconsistent with his temporal interest.

If the time and means for accumulating earthly goods be mispent, how can we comply with the kind exhortation, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness?" Without the means of relieving the necessities of the afflicted, how can we succour them? To endure a distressing and lingering illness, or to bear the infirmities peculiar to old age, and at the same time to be destitute of the comforts requisite to such a state, through former indolence or extravagance, must fill the mind with keen reflection and painful reproaches. Youth is the season peculiarly favourable to a preparation and beginning, to accumulate the varied blessings of life. But parents, who are the instruments of bringing their children into the world, are bound to make suitable provision for their several wants. Hence, says the Apostle Paul, "The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." Instead of this, however, we behold some profusely squander wealth, and waste their fortunes; and others, who are too indifferent to exert themselves for their children's welfare,

They are busy here and there, but their daily employments are wholly incompatible with the peace and prosperity of their families. How should a parent's heart be pained at the thought of having his children dependant on others for support, when his own misconduct is the chief cause of such dependence! Then may industry and economy witness our conduct; that negligence and trivial pursuits may not cause us to live in the want of the conveniences of life, and prove the ruin of our interests as it respects the temporal blessings of Heaven.

3dly. *Mental improvement forbids that we be busy about remote concerns, to the neglect of immediate duty.*

It depends upon our own exertions, whether our minds be employed in treasuring up trivial and vain ideas, or those which are interesting and useful. Some are busy here and there in the pursuit of knowledge, which cannot benefit themselves nor others, instead of that which is worthy to be remembered and communicated. But how important that the several faculties of the mind be exerted on subjects suited to the dignity of its rational nature, that sensual and sinful thoughts be not intruding! Youth is the season peculiarly favourable to mental improvement; for then, with the growth of the animal frame, the mind is capable of the greatest expansion. If this precious season be unimproved, the intellectual nature must sustain a loss which no future exertions can possibly retrieve. Then may diligence and a seasonable attention to study and reflection, refine the mind and enlarge the understanding. Let virtuous principles and habits be instilled into the minds of children, lest they indulge in those that are vicious. The mind, like a field that is uncultivated, is liable to be overgrown with thorns and briars, which, when deeply rooted, and wide spread, can scarcely be eradicated. May our adorning be that of the inner man, that the mental

powers be invigorated and brightened, and not stu-
pified and darkened.

4thly. *To guard against error and delusion.*

Mankind should not be busy about remote concerns, to the neglect of present duty, lest they insensibly fall into a state of skepticism and infidelity. Error is calculated to bewilder the mind, and gradually to efface the impressions of truth. For this reason, young persons should avoid the reading of books of infidelity as they would the poison of asps; and they should turn away from skeptical conversation, as from an adder that would bite them. The allurements of falsehood under the appearance of truth, whether from Satan or his agents, will, in the end, bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. But we are apt to be deceived and embrace delusions, when in quest of that knowledge which edifieth not, but puffeth up. Would we conscientiously and prayerfully seek for truth as for hidden treasures, we should be alarmed at the appearance of falsehood and delusion, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. To be busy here and there, by reading books, or hearing conversation which is unprofitable and inconsistent with immediate duty, is one step towards fatal delusion. The conversation of that company which would treat with levity the gospel of Christ, breathes a poison deadly to the soul. Then may we beware and take heed to our ways, that we be not busy about remote concerns, to the neglect of immediate duty, lest infidelity and skepticism prove our ruin.

5thly. *To mispend youthful days, is highly dan-
gerous.*

Mankind should not be busy about remote concerns, to the neglect of immediate duty; but in early life should make religion their main business, or they will experience a great loss through the whole of their existence. Youth is emphatically the golden period of life; and the season peculiarly favourable for obtaining an interest in the rich bless-

ings of the gospel. Then the mind is most susceptible of serious and lasting impressions; and they who seek religion early, are encouraged by promises peculiar to themselves. Habits of resisting the truth, and neglecting the various means of grace, are not then formed as in riper years. Those peculiar discouragements and difficulties, which are common to a more advanced life, do not set themselves in array to dissuade from the work.

But alas! how venturesome, if not fatal, to pass this period of existence, and not attend to the one thing needful! The greater part of those who pass the morning of their lives in impenitence, give no evidence, when their sun sets, that they are reconciled to God through the death of his Son. Sad reflection! to be on the decline of life, before the work for eternity is begun! And of the few who are constrained in middle age to walk in newness of life, how are their hearts pained when they reflect, that in their youth they were busy here and there; but were not then immediately and solicitously engaged to secure the salvation of their souls! They grieve and lament that the bloom of life was spent in the paths of folly and devices of Satan; and not in the ways of wisdom and service of God. And their evidence that they are the subjects of renewing and saving grace, is not generally so firm and bright as that of those who, by a pious and godly life, remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

Moreover, a life of early piety and devotedness in the cause of Christ, will reap a more glorious recompence of reward in eternity, than will the mere remains of life spent in his service. This must be true, if the reward be according to works. A life of engagedness for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, particularly that of youth and health, is more for the honour and glory of God, than it is to serve him only in the decline of life. Then let not youth spend their golden

moments in remote concerns, and the ways of vanity; but in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. Thus may they reap peculiar blessings both in time and in eternity. But if they refuse, they forsake their own mercies; they turn away from their dearest interest. If they neglect immediate duty, for the sake of any foreign pursuit, they are treasuring up sorrow, and throwing barriers in the way of their own salvation. Let them not be busy about remote concerns, to the neglect of their immortal interest; but in early life make religion their main business, or they will experience a great loss through the whole of their existence.

6thly. *A word to professors of religion.*

If believers be busy about remote concerns to the neglect of present duty, they mar their own peace, and pierce themselves with many sorrows. As an encouragement for them to abound in every Christian virtue, the joys of religion are generally apportioned to their faithfulness. They who daily keep the great end of their calling and profession in view, by their walking with God, anticipate some of the joys of heaven upon earth. But as a chastisement for unfaithfulness, they that wander, feel the rod. They who are busy here and there, in some pursuit remote from duty, do not experience the smile, but the frown of heaven. Like rebellious Israel of old, some who profess the gospel of Christ, seem bent on going astray. Such do not only blight their fair prospects, but they render their path a dreary wilderness, instead of that of the just, which brightens more and more unto the perfect day. Instead of their candle shining as with the effulgence of noon, it scarcely appears as the dim light of a taper. When believers are watchful and faithful, their souls enjoy a feast of fat things. But when they depart from the law of life, they wander over barren mountains, or sandy deserts, where are no cooling shades nor living springs.

How chilled the affections, how formed the conversation, and sad the experience of believers, who leave their first love, and neglect their immediate duty !

7thly. *If believers be busied about remote concerns, to the neglect of present duty, they are in danger of falling into grievous sins.*

The renewal of the heart by grace, is no security against sin, without resisting temptation and watching unto prayer. Although saints are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation ; yet they must watch and pray, and attend to their immediate duty, lest they step into some forbidden path, and greatly dishonour his name. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, busied about remote concerns, falls into shameful intoxication. Moses, the meekest of men, the moment he neglects present duty, speaks unadvisedly with his lips. Aaron, the priest, straying step by step, is persuaded to make a golden calf. The prophet Jonah, turning aside from duty, attempts to flee from the presence of his Maker ; and after a merciful deliverance, he replies with presumption. David, the man after God's own heart, forgetting his honour and duty, commits adultery, and then is guilty of murder. Peter, the ready follower of Christ, by turning aside a little, unexpectedly, with an oath, denies his Lord and Master. What stains in these characters ! What dishonour to the cause of religion ! And would believers, at the present day, not wound their own souls and the cause which they have espoused, by some heinous transgression, let them be careful not to neglect their immediate duty.

8thly. *To be busy about remote concerns, to the neglect of present duty, proves the final destruction of many of the human race.*

Mankind have immortal souls committed to their care, which they are forbidden to neglect upon the pain of death. They, who are busy here and there till they lose their souls, will experience an irrepa-

rable loss. As the man was unable to satisfy divine justice, or pay a ransom for his life, so they will ever be unable to pay the uttermost farthing, or to redeem their souls from the curse of the law. Although heaven is at an infinite remove in consequence of sin ; yet, through the atonement of Christ and the means of grace, it is possible to be obtained. Notwithstanding, it may be lost; and some, instead of eternal life, reap eternal death. Not only open vice, but the neglect of immediate duty, the neglect of the great salvation, proves the final ruin of many.

Let us again call to mind the words of the text : " And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." It does not appear that the man was busy in sinful or unlawful pursuits; but he neglected safely to guard and keep the one delivered into his custody ; and for the safe keeping and delivery of whom he was responsible, even at the expense of his own life. While he was engaged in other pursuits of less solemn importance, the prisoner made his escape. Just so, many lose their souls by seeking mere trifles, instead of striving to enter in at the strait gate. Instead of engaging with seriousness in immediate duty, which is of the greatest moment ; they would be busy here and there in remote concerns, till they think it a convenient season. The gospel is committed to them; and they are charged to keep it unto the day of Jesus Christ. But when the Holy Spirit urges to immediate duty, whether of repentance, prayer, or perseverance, how do some resort to remote concerns ; perhaps to a social circle, a pleasing anecdote, or some novel ! Instead of making the word of God their guide, they follow the fancies of a lively imagination. In times of general awakenings, while some engage with all diligence, through divine grace, to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling ; others, with unremitting perseverance, work out their own destruction. They suffer some pur-

suit, remote from the great end of their being, to engage their attention, till death comes upon them unawares, and they are destroyed suddenly, and that without remedy. Thus their souls are gone—gone to the region of darkness and the perdition of the ungodly. Would they in time have laid their dearest interest to heart, they would not, with consternation in eternity, lament their criminal neglect. How solemn the fact ! how alarming the truth ! that the being busy about remote concerns, to the neglect of present duty, proves the final destruction of many of the human race !

REMARKS.

1st. *Adam, or reader, where art thou ?*

This subject naturally suggests the inquiry to each one of us, Where am I, what am I doing, and whither am I going ? Am I at my proper station, in the pursuit of secular concerns, and attendance on religious duties ? Am I engaged in those pursuits which become a rational, accountable, and immortal being ? Am I travelling in the strait and narrow way of immediate duty which leadeth to life, or in the broad road of remote concerns, which leads to death ?

2dly. *How important for every soul to shun the very appearance of evil !*

To resist the first risings of temptation, is easy ; but to parley with the tempter, till by his wiles he place his fascinating baits, and exhibit sin in all its deceitful and alluring charms, is dangerous, and yielding to his power. Thus the soul is led his willing captive. As birds, exposed to the fascinations of a serpent, if they first take the alarm, make their escape.—But, if they listen to his deadly wiles and fatal enchantments, instead of flying away, they first make eccentric flights, next come near and hover around him, then lose the power of flight ; and with a few feeble flutters, fall a victim to their devouring enemy.—So is it fatally pernicious to the

soul to give heed to the suggestions of Satan, and not resist his deadly cunning and delusive schemes when first perceived. At first, resistance is not difficult; but if we hearken to the great deceiver, as to some kind angel, we fall a prey to his delusions and power.

3dly. *We may behold the astonishing goodness and compassion of God, in giving a divine revelation to man.*

The sacred volume not only makes known that the door of heaven is opened for lost man, but with the most friendly cautions and warnings, it reveals the hidden dangers which beset the heavenly road. In tender mercy, counsels of wisdom and salutary admonitions are given, that the wandering may return, and the weary soul find rest. No suitable instruction is withheld; and all that is encouraging and endearing, invites us to walk in the way of salvation.

4thly. *This subject presents every possible encouragement to attend to the concerns of immediate duty.*

This is the proper way to secure the comforts of this life, to promote our present peace and highest enjoyment upon earth. Present duty is immediately and inseparably connected with the dearest interest of our fellow men, and by reciprocation to double our own joys. And as to those joys which are on high, the faithful discharge of our duty towards God and man, will reap endless and increasing felicity. The evils of life and those of futurity forbid us to be busy about remote concerns. But cheering prospects for time, and unspeakable blessings for eternity, are the reward of well doing, and should inspire that our employments and enjoyments be, in attending to the concerns of immediate duty, and preparing for immortal glory.

SERMON XX.

THE PATH OF HUMAN HAPPINESS.

PSALM IV. 6.

There be many that say, Who will show us any good?

THE desire of happiness is connatural to the minds of intelligent beings. All men wish to be happy, notwithstanding so many pursue courses wholly inconsistent with the attainment of this desirable end. Whether mankind be holy or sinful; whether they walk in the strait and narrow way that leadeth to life, or in the broad road that leads to death, they are inquiring after happiness. This is an object truly worthy of their pursuit, and there is but one higher or more noble motive which can inspire the human breast. Moral fitness, or the seeking to know and to do the will of God so as to promote the greatest good of his moral kingdom, is the most glorious principle by which man can be excited to action. Such a sentiment and excitement are the dignity of human nature; a royal diadem to crown the head of man. But all are not thus nobly influenced.

Says the psalmist, “*There be many that say, Who will show us any good?*” Perhaps the true import of this expression is, Many inquire after happiness, without knowing what it is, or seeking where it may be found. They may desire any enjoyments of a worldly and sensual nature, and be willing to pursue any courses for self-gratification. Such would delight in any object or pursuit, that would afford even sinful pleasures.—The inquiry

may be, What earthly or created good, when rightly pursued, will promote human happiness?—Some, when they make the interrogation, “Who will show us any good?” would convey this idea, That none but God can satisfy the desires of an immortal mind.

In the prosecution of this subject, my object is to point out the path of human happiness.

In the world above, all are completely happy; but, in the present state, happiness is variously distributed, and in general according to the propriety and uprightness of the moral conduct. Hence the present and future prospects of human beings depend much upon themselves, or upon a wise and faithful improvement of means and talents. But suffer me first to present the reader with some observations from Sterne on this subject.

“The great pursuit of man is happiness, which is the first and strongest desire of his nature. In every stage of his life he searches for it, as for hid treasure. He courts it under a thousand different shapes; and though perpetually disappointed, still persists, runs, and inquires for it afresh; asks every passenger, who comes in his way, Who will show him any good? who will assist him in the attainment of it, or direct him to the discovery of this great end of all his wishes?

“He is told by one, to search for it among the more gay and youthful pleasures of life; in scenes of mirth and sprightliness, where happiness ever presides, and is ever to be known by the joy and laughter which he will see, at once, painted in her looks.

“A second, with a graver aspect, points to the costly dwellings which pride and extravagance have erected; tells the inquirer, that the object of which he is in search, resides there; that happiness lives only in company with the great, in the midst of much pomp and outward state; that he will easily find her out by the fineness and costliness of her

dress; by the great luxury, the expense of equipage and furniture, with which she is always surrounded.

“The miser blesses God—wonders how any one would mislead and wilfully put him upon so wrong a path; is convinced that happiness and extravagance never dwelt under the same roof; that if he would not be disappointed in his search, he must look into the plain and thrifty dwelling of the prudent man, who understands the worth of money, and cautiously lays it up against an evil day. He is persuaded that it is not the prostitution of wealth upon the passions, or the parting with it at all, that constitutes happiness; but that it is the keeping of it together, and the holding it fast to him and his heirs for ever, which are the chief attributes that form this great idol of human worship, to which so much incense is offered up every day.

“The epicure, though he easily rectifies so gross a mistake, yet at the same time, plunges him, if possible, into a greater; for, hearing the object of his pursuit to be happiness, and knowing of no other enjoyment than what is seated immediately in the senses; he sends the inquirer there, tells him it is in vain to search for it elsewhere, than where nature herself has placed it, even in the gratification of the appetites, which are given us for that end. And in a word, if he will not take his opinion in the matter, he may trust the word of a much wiser man, who has assured us, that there is nothing better in this world than that a man should eat, and drink, and rejoice in his works, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour, for that is his portion.

“But to rescue him from this sensual experiment, ambition takes him by the hand, leads him forth into the world, shows him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them; points out the many ways of advancing his fortune, and raising himself to honour; lays before his eyes all the charms and bewitching temptations of power: and then asks,

if there can be any happiness in this life, like that of being caressed, courted, flattered, and followed?

"To close all, the philosopher meets him bustling in the full career of his pursuit; stops him, tells him if he is in search of happiness, he is far gone out of his way. The fullest assurance is given, that this goddess has long been banished from noise and tumults, where no rest could be found; has fled into solitude, far from all commerce of the world. In a word, if he would find her, he must leave this busy and intriguing theatre, and go back to that peaceful scene of retirement and books, from which he at first set out.—Alas, how often does man run the round of this circle! try all experiments, and generally sit down weary and dissatisfied with them all at last, in utter despair of ever accomplishing what he wants, not knowing to what to trust, after so many disappointments, nor where to lay the fault; whether in the incapacity of his own nature, or the insufficiency of the enjoyments themselves.

"In this uncertain and perplexed state, without knowing which way to turn, or where to betake ourselves for refuge, so often abused and deceived by the many who pretend thus to do good, Lord, says the Psalmist, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. That is, sell us some rays of thy grace and heavenly wisdom, in this benighted search after happiness, to direct our goings in the sure path. O! let us not wander for ever without a guide in this dark region, in endless pursuit of our mistaken good, but enlighten our eyes that we sleep not in death. Open to them the comforts of thine holy word, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, and make us know the joy and satisfaction of living in the true faith and fear of Thee, which alone can carry us to this haven of rest where true joys are to be found; and which will at length not only answer all our expectations, but satisfy the most unbounded of our wishes for ever and ever."

Having selected these interesting remarks, let us attend directly to the examination of the present subject, which will lead us in the right way in our pursuit after happiness, as we are instructed from the oracles of divine truth.

1st. *The restraining and governing of unruly passions, is a necessary step for those that would be happy.*

The active principles of human nature, if they be in subordination and properly exercised, become springs to exertion and sources of enjoyment; but if they be unrestrained, and rage with violent impulse, they will render a man wretched. To have the government of one's self is to lead a peaceable and quiet life, and enjoy a serene day; whilst the man who does not restrain his passions, is like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Says Solomon in his Proverbs, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls." Such a one is liable to be overcome by every enemy; for he is exposed to constant assaults, and has his mind continually ruffled. How does every malicious man disturb his own peace, and become a wretched prey to every designing intruder! While others are fanned by a pleasant gale, and cheered by the gentle zephyrs, he is tossed by the surges of a boisterous ocean. A person who gives loose reins to a spirit of jealousy, is disturbed at every thing he sees or hears; and the sweets of life are embittered to his taste, if not converted into the most baneful poison. The envious man, how is he prepared to be wretched! though the means of happiness abound within his reach. He pines in secret, blights his own fair prospects, and becomes his own tormentor. The passionate man every idle word throws into a phrenzy, and agitates his passions like the tumult of an assaulted city. Regardless of reputation or friendship, he scatters around him fire-brands, arrows, and death. Unrestrained passions acquire

strength, and soon hurry their wretched victim with an almost irresistible force, to the quicksands and whirlpools of death.

On the other hand, what greatness of soul for a man to have the rule over his own spirit! The victory over one's self, is a conquest immensely more important and glorious than that of conquering armies and subduing kingdoms. Some persons are doubtless more exposed to temptation from the passions, than others; but to such, especially, does the exhortation apply with force, To keep the heart with all diligence, and set a double guard over the tongue, that they may be the issues of life. Let human beings so command themselves as to regulate the active principles of their nature, to the end for which they were implanted; which is, to promote individual and general happiness.

2dly. They who would promote human happiness, must not yield to the excessive indulgence of appetite.

A man may be a glutton as well as a drunkard. Probably as many indulge in excessive eating in the participation of their daily food, as do in the drinking of spirituous liquors; and perhaps the consequences are as extensively sad and ruinous. By frequent excesses in eating, no doubt thousands and thousands have been thrown into a violent fever and brought to an untimely grave. From the same cause, perhaps, a still greater number have fallen into other diseases which have preyed upon their vitals; and by a gradual yet fatal pace, have greatly shortened their days. Every gluttonous person gradually enervates his body; greatly beclouds and enfeebles all the powers of his mind; and brings on himself a heavy stupor and strange stupidity. Gluttony blunts all the tender and interesting feelings of a human being, and bars all the noble avenues of a refined sensibility. In addition to the varied and lasting diseases both of body and mind which it entails upon its miserable subjects, it

draws them into the sad habits of inactivity and idleness, which are the parents, the nurseries, and forerunners of the most pernicious vices and the most degrading crimes. If a person eat to excess but seldom, or even but once, he destroys his own comfort, sins against God, and wounds both soul and body. How does excessive eating render a person unfit for rational reflection! what an enemy to cheerfulness and mental improvement! and what a flood gate to every kind of vain imaginations! How important, then, for those who would regard their own comfort, and promote their health, to be constantly temperate in the participation of their daily food!

In opposition to the indulgence of gratifying an irregular and vitiated appetite, the word of God teaches, that the righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul. He becomes not a slave to appetite, nor does he satiate and increase sensual cravings; but he exercises reason and judgement concerning the portion of food which at any time may be suitable. Says Solomon in his Proverbs, "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." This striking caution will serve to evince, that the effects of excessive eating must be most pernicious indeed. But temperance, in this respect, is the mother, the nurse, and friend, of a constant train of virtuous and rich blessings. How very important, then, for the promotion of human happiness, that we be temperate in eating, and not yield to the excessive indulgence of appetite!

3dly. *The refraining from vicious courses, is necessary to the promotion of human happiness.*

All those offences which are opposite to a course of virtue, may be denominated vice. There are some who shun openly gross and notorious vices; but they practise others, though directly opposed to their own peace. To be guilty of lying, or of telling an untruth, in what some would deem trifling concerns, is a sin against God and man; and

cannot but plant thorns in a rational and conscious breast. To cheat, or overreach a fellow mortal, may afford a momentary pleasure, in view of the dishonest gain; yet how often will conscience sting and render an unhappy one more wretched! To backbite may gratify some sinful disposition; but the mere sight, or even the reflection of the person reviled, will afterwards cause the reviler to be pained with shame and conscious guilt. Profanity, dissipation and debauchery, are sins which must now and then pierce the breasts of the guilty, as if a dagger were entering their hearts. Let us beware, then, of every vice. “But whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

4thly. *The forming of early and regular habits, is very important for the promotion of human happiness*

By the term *habit*, is to be understood the power or ability of doing any thing easily and naturally, in consequence of the frequent repetition of the same action. Man is said to be made up of a bundle of habits, and these have a powerful sway either for his enjoyment or distress. The habit of industry in some honest calling, or of study in some useful profession, is important for young persons. To be trained up to cleanliness of person, decency of dress, and engaging manners, is certainly worthy of attention. The habit of rising early in the morning, is of vast benefit; as it is so well calculated to promote our daily comfort and prosperity, our health and wealth. Our domestick and civil pursuits, all moral virtues and religious duties, may, by frequent and regular repetition, and proper attention, become habitual. Habits of temperance and vigilance, of methodising and reasoning, are very advantageous. The carefulness and labour

bestowed in forming early and noble habits, are thousands of times repaid in this present state, by the pleasure and profit which they produce. How most desirable and essential to human happiness are good habits!

5thly. *To seek the preservation or promotion of health, is an important step in the path of human happiness.*

Such is the intimate union of soul and body, and their reciprocal influence upon each other, that they have constantly mutual sympathies, in the enjoyments or distresses of life. Hence it is, that the activity and vigour of the body give energy and hilarity to the mind. Bodily health is most closely connected with serenity and joy in the soul. The degree of enjoyment of all things around us, is greatly in proportion to the measure of the health of any person, and the flow of spirits which are a concomitant. How insipid are our lawful pleasures, when the body is enfeebled and in a languishing state! The satisfaction from food and raiment, from the arts and sciences, from friends and relatives, is greatly diminished and dried up, to those who are afflicted with bodily infirmities. The mind is debilitated and prospects blighted, when the corporal system is diseased and enervated. How careful, then, should each one be, not to do any thing unnecessarily, or indulge in any pursuit or gratification, that would tend to injure their bodily health, and how readily pursue those methods which are calculated for its preservation and promotion!

6thly. *An easy and social conversation is very favourable to human happiness.*

The gift of speech is an inestimable blessing, for the mutual instruction and consolation of the great human family. Parents, who are sociable and apt to teach, may not only do much for the welfare of their children, but also for their own enjoyment. The instructor of children and youth who delights to communicate useful instruction, not only inte-

rests his pupils, but must himself take much satisfaction from his own labours. The minister of the gospel who has the talent of readily introducing religious conversation, and of comforting the afflicted, must have his own heart gladdened from the benevolent counsels of his own words. Youth, who cultivate an easy, encouraging, and instructive conversation, are not only acceptable and respected by their friends and companions, but they are active in the path of their own happiness. As he that watereth shall himself also be watered; so words fitly spoken, are evidence of a generous breast and joyful heart. As a good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things, so is it favourable to human happiness for human and social beings to acquire and encourage the talent of an animating conversation.

7thly. *To cultivate a spirit of contentment, is very important for human happiness.*

The phrase, a contented mind, may be clearly understood, if we consider it as the contrast of a fretful and restless disposition. It depends more on the state of the mind, than on external things, whether a man be contented or discontented with his present lot; or whether he attend to the avocations of life with quietness and content, or with uneasiness and discontent. Persons who indulge a peevish and fretful disposition, not only render those unhappy around them, but they are constantly rendering themselves miserable. A person's circumstances may be ever so favourable, and his prospects the most promising; still, if discontent rankle his breast, he is a poor man, for he is an unhappy man. What can wealth, friends, or education, avail any one, who has a spirit so uneasy and unhappy as not to be able to enjoy them? The spirit of contentment may be cherished not only in a high, but also in a low estate. St. Paul observes, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Contentment is for the health of the body, favours

cheerfulness of mind, and promotes happiness in every breast, wherever it is found.

8thly *To bear afflictions with patience and submission, is necessary for them that would promote human happiness.*

The present probationary state, is a world of trial, of disappointment, of sickness, pain, and separation; and to bear up with manly and Christian fortitude under these calamities, is the part of wisdom. When suffering any affliction, to be unsubmissive, and to give up to impatience, is only to add vexation to grief, and greatly to enhance our difficulties. When the Lord chastens, to murmur and repine, and to spurn at the rod, is not only a sin, but an aggravation of our own distress. When Job was most grievously afflicted with all the calamities of life, how would he have increased his own burdens, had he been unhumbled, and not submissive to the divine Providence! Some afflictions are very grievous, and may cause human beings to weep bitterly, by filling their souls with anguish; but let them beware, lest their hearts fret against God, and their trials be turned into a curse. When patience and submission to the divine will are exercised in view of the calamities that fall upon us, they are sanctified, and work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Then, to bear afflictions, losses, and bereavements, with patience and submission, is necessary for them that would promote human happiness.

9thly. *Engagedness in the pursuit of some desirable object, tends greatly to the promotion of human happiness.*

As human beings are made for activity and improvement, so if they be suitably engaged in some useful pursuit, they are cheered and delighted as an encouragement to exertion, and a reward for their labour. Attention to any pursuit or calling, that is innocent and serviceable, is calculated to afford enjoyment; but the more noble the pursuit, or the more extensive the utility of the object of our en-

gagedness, the greater is the prospect in favour of human happiness. The lawful acquisition of property, the education of children, or attention to some mechanical pursuit, are not only objects for exertion, but the means of enjoyment.

"The happiness, no less than the improvement of our nature, lies chiefly in constant and useful employment, stimulated by necessary wants. Hence the very efforts, excited by their apprehension, often produce a satisfaction or diversion to the mind, which far overbalances their evils. And labour, though it be a curse upon man fallen from the perfection of his nature, is a blessing in his present state of existence. In a moral point of view, it should be regarded as a part of the benevolent discipline of our heavenly Father."—Still the framing of wise and wholesome laws, of the projecting some great work for very extensive utility, affords a more ample field for the generous and noble powers of the mind, to be enlarged and delighted. It is by activity and diligence, that any of our talents can be improved, and the happiness of mankind advanced. As many as are the evils which can be enumerated arising from sloth, so many are the opposite and rich blessings, issuing from engagedness in the pursuit of some lawful, desirable, and noble object.

10thly. *In pointing out the path of human happiness, the last particular is naturally this: Religion is man's highest good.*

Happiness, consummate and durable, can be found only in the immediate enjoyment of the fountain and source of excellence. The various particulars which have been noticed, are well calculated to promote our happiness, and wisdom loudly admonishes that we do not lightly esteem them. But still, the human soul is capable of soaring after higher objects, and of aspiring after more perfect joys. The Prophet Micah exclaims, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do

justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Here justice between man and man is pointed out; mercy is brought to view, to point men, as sinners, to Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life; and a humble walk with God, is to be an evidence of their supreme love to him. Says Solomon, after giving abundant and good instruction, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." By these words we are taught, that they who would be truly happy, should not make a selfish inquiry after happiness; but their great pursuit should be, to know and do the will of their Father who is in heaven, as this is the great end of their creation, and would exalt them to immortal glory.

Philosophy will teach men the importance of governing unruly passions; but the spirit of Christ, reigning in the soul, leads to the forgiveness of injuries, and teaches men to be temperate in all things. The religion of Jesus, enables to lead godly lives, and leads to a habit of praying. It has a cordial for the soul, by causing it to hold converse with God as its chief joy. The apostle Paul observes, "that godliness with contentment is great gain." And in the view of his own trials and sufferings with those of his brethren, Christian submission by divine grace, enabled him to say with joyful and triumphant hope, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal."

The one who is rightly engaged in the things of religion, has prospects of happiness far more glorious than can possibly be conceived by the heart of man, from any other pursuits or sources. Reason and self-interest, may teach the utility of cul-

tivating all the moral virtues; but the gospel infuses those heaven-born graces, which will for ever expand in glory, and produce the rapturous joys of immortality. It is true religion, which can give tranquillity in infirmity; can buoy up the soul in the storms of life, and at last safely land it in the haven of eternal rest. This is the one thing needful, which includes all that can be desired by an immortal and ever expanding mind. And it is only this, which can give sufficient peace and consolation in all the trying scenes of life, and cause the soul to triumph over death and hell, and join the innumerable company above.

Then may this subject give us enlarged views of ourselves, and excite us duly to reflect on the momentous relations which we sustain. Shall not every one awake, and reflect that he is destined to eternity; and that if he become a holy being, he is to be associated with angels and seraphs, and admitted into the glorious presence of his God and Saviour, to go no more out for ever? Let each one contemplate on the depths of his own immortal mind, and extend his thoughts down the line of endless duration, to inquire what he must be, when the sun and stars shall have been blotted out for millions of millions of ages; and his capacities of enjoyment or suffering, shall have expanded beyond the present dimensions of the highest seraph. With such reflections as these, may we, by divine grace, be enabled to pursue the true path of human happiness.

SERMON XXI.

LITTLE THINGS MAKE UP THE CHARACTER OF A MAN.

LUKE XVI. 10.

He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.

THE holy scriptures are a peculiar fund of instruction in concerns both of the smallest and of the greatest moment. They teach the truth in reality, and according to the mind of God; not in appearance, and suited to the views of men. And they decide the characters of mankind, not merely from their external conduct, but from the motives of their hearts—not from a few splendid acts, but from the general deportment of life. Hence, those exploits which are frequently the astonishment of the world, are of little esteem in the view of God; and, on the other hand, a life of godliness is of much value in his sight, although it obtain not the applauses of men. No doubt there are some, who by their fellow men are honoured as good and great; but whom, at the same time, the Lord holdeth in abomination. And doubtless some who are thought not worthy to live, and who are accounted as the offscouring of the earth, will at last shine as stars in the kingdom of God for ever and ever.

The words of the text are the inference and declaration of the Saviour concerning the steward, who, for his own worldly interest, had induced his lord's debtors to act dishonestly. And although he is commended, as it respects worldly wisdom, in making provision for his approaching state of want;

yet, for his dishonest measures, he is condemned as an unfaithful steward.

"There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee ? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said unto himself, What shall I do ? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do; that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord ? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he unto another, And how much owest thou ? And he said, an hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four-score. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much ; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

These words teach us, that little things make up the character of a man, and are a proper criterion by which mankind are denominated either good or bad, faithful or unfaithful.

This truth might be extensively illustrated from the system of creation. The immensity of the divine works, is composed of parts; or in other words, innumerable worlds constitute the universe. This material world is composed of elements; and even particles of matter comprise the whole. The face of nature, when exhibiting its most beautiful sce-

nery, is unbounded and infinitely diversified; yet spires of grass, plants, and leaves of trees, are the component parts. We sometimes behold the heavens overspread with clouds; but their substance is mists, or vapours of the air. Rivers, rills, and even springs, may be considered as the fountains of the mighty deep. Storms of snow and hail, and the falling showers, give demonstration to our senses, that all things in nature are made up of little things.

The subject might be pursued in this manner to great extent; but calculated to please rather than to benefit mankind, as their own experience would not be brought immediately to the test. This discourse should be of such a nature as to make both reader and hearer feel themselves deeply interested, and should serve as a glass into which they may look, and discern their true characters, whether good or bad. And for this purpose, let us bear in mind, that a few acts, although they be laudable, conspicuous, and brilliant, are not sufficient to establish an upright and excellent character; neither are a few misdeeds, although known to the world, sufficient to destroy an established Christian character.

For example, a life prostituted to vicious courses, cannot be denominated a virtuous one, merely from a few acts of humanity, generosity, or patriotism. On the other hand, some of the worthies recorded in scripture, who, in the hour of temptation, committed grievous sins, did not destroy their religious character, although they brought a stain on their good profession. Suppose a person of sober habits fall into the sin of intoxication but once or twice during his life—this will not fix on him the character of a drunkard. Neither will he, on the other hand, who is addicted to lying, if he occasionally speak the truth, be denominated a person of veracity. Greatly to extol any person because a few things are noted in his favour, and to pronounce such a one upright on the account of these, when other circumstances are not correspondent, disco-

vers weakness of mind, and a want of knowledge of the world, and of the word of God. Neither should we be hasty to condemn any one as possessing a bad character, because some faults appear ; but should learn his varied deportment, especially his daily walk, would we form an opinion concerning his true worth.

1st. *Little things make up the character of a man, as it respects his conduct in the common affairs of life.*

Some persons with great activity, occasionally exert themselves, and effect much in the course of a day ; yet this does not entitle them to the character of industry, although they be applauded for performing unparalleled labours, or effecting wondrous exploits. But, if a person be daily and perseveringly engaged in some useful occupation, though he be able to accomplish but little, he is justly called an industrious man. Sometimes acts of enterprise make a man wealthy, and at once secure a fortune. But generally to accumulate property little by little, is the manner by which we are to obtain the character of faithful stewards in the good things of this life, and to have economy and frugality witness our daily conduct.

Again : little things will render a man a prodigal and spendthrift. Prodigality, like a flood which desolates the best of farms, and buries in sad ruins large estates, is frequently made up of little things, perhaps not larger than half gills. Negligence and wastefulness in matters of small moment, will soon arise to a great and sad amount. Very few, at one hazardous blow, lavish an estate ; but thousands squander away their substance insensibly, and their little excesses, like a moth, consume all they possess. It is a common proverb, Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves. So the wasting of cents, is the consumption of thousands of dollars. Thus the present prospects of a man, whether goodly or sad, depend generally on little things, which serve to form his character.

2dly. *Little things make up the character of mankind as honest or dishonest.*

For illustration, let a few examples be taken. Suppose a merchant set an unreasonable price on some articles, with which the buyer is not acquainted. He is a cheat; for his store is opened with an implicit promise of dealing fairly and honourably. He might as well, by sleight of hand, take money from a person's pocket without his knowledge. Let him so adjust his weights, that he will fraudulently save but the hundredth part of an ounce on each pound he weighs, he is a dishonest man. He needs not be chargeable with open injustice, or cheating by the gross, to establish his true character; for he makes this up by little things. But this same person would defraud others of large sums, could he over-reach them and not be detected. And, if he be not fraudulent in concerns of large amount, the true reason is not, that he is not a dishonest character, but because he believes such a course of knavish dealing would not, in the end, so well answer his unlawful gain. This is the true import of the expression, "He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." Take by contrast, one who is conscientiously honest in all the minute affairs and pursuits of life, and the same principle will lead him to uprightness when matters of much importance are presented before him. For it is equally true, he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.

Let a silversmith knowingly defraud those of whom he buys, or to whom he sells, of only one cent on a dollar, or an ounce of old silver, he stamps his own character with dishonesty. But let him fear dishonest gain in trivial concerns, and he will not dare attempt it in those which are weighty.

Suppose that a farmer, in every half bushel of grain, or other things that he buys or sells, wrongs another of only one gill. This may be called a trifling dishonesty; but as little as it is, the words of the text announce it to be the true standard of his

character. Not only are false weights, false measures, and a false balance, an abomination to the Lord, but also trifling and designed errors, when we have those which are true.

Grant that a minister of the gospel should preach the truth clearly and forcibly, with wisdom and faithfulness; but that he leads not a life of piety, nor seeks to follow the directions which he gives to others. He is not only inconsistent, but doubly dishonest. A striking discourse, or a splendid appearance on the Sabbath, will not avail as a substitute for the smaller or more private duties of the week.

Let these few examples serve as glasses for persons of every trade, pursuit, and profession, into which they may look, and discern their true character. The application is easy; and that we examine and judge ourselves by little things, is of vast importance. We need not be deceived, nor seek for great things, to tell what manner of spirit we possess; for little things are the criterion which decide the character of a man.

3dly. *Little things may make up the character of a defamer or slanderer.*

The tongue is a little member, and it needs not utter great words, nor very bitter sayings, to do much injury. Persons may be free from open railing slander, and by discourses of surmises and curious inquiries, most effectually defame their neighbours. There are some who profess a tenderness for the character of others, but by their insinuations, aim to cast a reproach upon their good name. They would not be seen railing against them on publick occasions; yet, in the presence of a few, they are ever ready to express their doubts and fears concerning them. They give caution not to have their remarks spread, under pretence that they would not wish to injure them; but in reality that they may sheath a dagger in their hearts. In many instances, the secret whispers and slanders of an envious tongue, are

more pernicious than open and rank defamation, They are like a poisonous and deadly serpent, which is more to be dreaded, when concealed under the grass, than when exposed in an open field. Persons of integrity stand secure from manifest and virulent attacks ; but what can shield from secret aspersions, uttered with the spirit of Satan, and clothed with the appearance of an angel ? Who does not know that hints, surmises, and doubtful inquiries, though little things, are most fatal weapons ? Let whisperers and backbiters, talebearers and busybodies, yea, let us all remember, that flagrant expressions are not essential to slander ; but that little things may most effectually make up the character of a defamer.

4thly. *A moral and amiable character is made up of little things, which consists simply in rendering to all their dues.*

It is but a little thing that some be acknowledged as superiors, and honoured according to the dignity of their station, and the excellence of their character. The same courteous and friendly treatment which we may reasonably expect from our equals, is an easy rule to regulate our conduct towards them ; and we need not call it too small a thing, or esteem it beneath us, to pay proper attention to those whom we consider our inferiors. The parental character is made up of a train of little things, of varied and repeated acts, which are the natural result of parental affection. It is certainly a great work to train up a child in the way he should go ; and it is equally true, that little things, in due season, are sufficient to effect this. The duty of a child towards his parents, does not consist in great, but in little things. All the social duties may be comprised in seasonable attention and suitable conversation, and demand not brilliant talents nor extraordinary exertions. The character of the charitable man, is not formed generally from the bestowment of large sums ; but from his readiness to relieve and assist, little by little, according as situations and

circumstances require. A little seasonable aid, or a few salutary directions, may be of much avail to the poor, and to those who stand in need of counsel. A friend in need, is a friend indeed: and a word fitly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As it respects the various offices, relations, and duties, of this present life, we may do much good, if we seasonably attend to what may be called little things.

5thly. *The character of a patriot or hero of a nation, is most thoroughly established by little things.*

When we hear of the wondrous exploits and successes of any man, what a jewel is set in his character, if his private life and secret walk correspond to the dignity of his elevated station! Is Washington the glory of our nation, as he is the father of our country? How is his character dignified from the account of his servant, respecting his daily deportment, especially that of stated secret prayer, when he would withdraw to kneel before his Maker in his closet, to implore his guidance and blessing. General La Fayette is extolled as an American hero. But the generality do not consider that he embarked not to regain his own liberty, but ours; and that in our infant state he sacrificed his property, though little did he expect a rich reward at this day.—On the other hand, the character of Alexander the Great appears small, when we turn to the effeminity and latter end of his life.—The brilliant and successful exploits of any man are most glorious, as it respects his good name, when they are supported by the little things pertaining to his life, which add excellence to fame. How desirable that they who would render their names immortal among men, be found faithful in that which is least, that their memory be perpetuated in realms above. A few memorable events in any person's life, will not avail as an equivalent for the defects of the many little things which are the true standard and criterion by which the characters even of great men are made up.

6thly. *Little things must make up the character of most men, as few have capacity or opportunity for great and noble enterprises.*

Comparatively few of the human race, are gifted with extraordinary natural powers of mind; and fewer still have all the advantages necessary to cultivate them to their greatest extent. Of the few able and eminent men which at any time live, how small is the number of those who, in the whole course of their lives, have opportunity of doing what the world would call great things. A mere trifling number can be the monuments of history, and the astonishment of ages; for the principal part live and die in obscurity. They have not the power of being distinguished during their whole lives by any great and glorious work, or noble enterprise, consequently their memory is lost in oblivion at death. Ten thousand times ten thousand human beings are never known beyond the neighbourhood in which they are born. Many are brought up in the most lamentable ignorance, and scarcely ever hear of doings beyond their own town or vicinity. Concerning such, it is emphatically true, that little things make up their character; for their means of knowledge and opportunities of doing good are greatly limited. But whether they improve the talents they have; whether they be faithful or unfaithful according to their circumstances and abilities, is their important concern. Such persons do form characters either good or bad, and they are interested in this subject as well as others; for it teaches simple truth: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

7thly. *Little things make up the character of a man as a Christian, and will be the criterion by which at the last great day, sentence will be pronounced for eternity.*

The words of the text will be the test as a criterion by which we must be judged; but the sentence

to be pronounced will be a little varied : "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Then, a life of piety, though from a corner of obscurity and shrouded in abject poverty, will shine conspicuously, and out-dazzle all the pomp and grandeur of this world. Self-denial, meekness, and charity, will be most brilliant gems in the heavenly crown. The sceptres and badges of kings and princes, of popes and emperours, will fade away and shrivel as a scroll, when compared with those little things which will serve to show that a man has been faithful in that which is least. Let us then now realize the true import of the saying of our Saviour to his disciples : " Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." Let not the account of that little sum, *two mites*, which the poor widow cast into the treasury, be forgotten nor despised by us. Though a little thing, it is recorded for instruction, and has a direct bearing on our character.

Perhaps some would hope for divine approbation, neither from great nor little things ; but from neutral ground, or not openly opposing religion. Let me draw an arrow from the divine quiver, sharpened and made ready by the blessed Redeemer. " He that is not with me, is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad."

I see another character of quite a different form. It is one who glories in a wonderful conversion, exceeding that of the apostle Paul. The heavens seemed opened, and the angels of God, and the Son of man, appeared in all their glory. But, friend, have you none of those little things, which are cre-

dentials essential to a Christian character? O no, I think it not worthy to trouble myself about such things. My past conversion is all I ask, to make my calling and election sure; for a life of godliness would be an intolerable cross to me. Alas. deluded man! Satan has appeared to you transformed into an angel of light; and if you do not yet repent, and begin to walk in newness of life. he will meet you at last in the clouds of the air, and drag you down to the regions of despair. The secret motives of the heart, words, and retired places for prayer, will be sources of joy to some, and of consternation to others. Let us recollect that Naaman, the Syrian leper, was not required to do some great thing to effect his cure. Then let us take the simple and only safe means which God has given, to save from hell and raise to heaven. If we seek to do great things, and for these to be justified. we die: but if we neglect not those little things, which the word of life points out as essential to our forming a Christian character, we live. Yes, live in glorious immortality, when these heavens and this earth shall be no more.

REMARKS.

1st. The divine commands, and not human opinion, should be our rule of action.

In the light of this subject we may see, that our great concern should not be to know what the world may think of us, but how we are esteemed in the sight of God. It is desirable to have the good opinion of others; and earthly friends in this pilgrimage state, are important. If an upright and courteous conduct will secure the esteem of our fellow men, we should endeavour to obtain their respect, that we may be the more useful. Still, we ought not seek to be men-pleasers, but the servants of God. And when our name is evil spoken of, when our motives and character are questioned by others, our solicitations should be to obtain the approbation of

the Searcher of hearts. Our fellow mortals may be deceived, or from some evil design, may judge us uncharitably: but it will be a strong consolation, if the Lord who cannot err, smile upon us. Better to have all the world in hostile array against us, and to suffer the most bitter persecution, if we have Heaven on our side, than to please all men, and not be the servants of Christ. As it is desirable to have the friendship, sympathies, and aids of our fellow mortals, so is it infinitely important to have that communion, and those joys, which are the effect of being reconciled to God through the death of his Son. Happy is that man who has a good report among his fellow men; but blessed is the one who, like Enoch, walketh with God, and who enjoyeth the smiles of his reconciled countenance, and that peace which passeth understanding.

2dly. When we see criminals arraigned before human tribunals, we should exercise compassion and pity, rather than scorn and contempt.

It is possible, such may not be more guilty than some of the spectators. Suppose for instance a person is condemned for having robbed another of a thousand dollars. Do we look upon him with abhorrence and dread? Perhaps he would not have committed the deed, had he not been in straitened circumstances. Or could he have obtained but a dollar at a time by some other dishonest means, he might not have had recourse to robbery. Probably he would rather have obtained the same sum from several persons than from one.—Yes, and the person who habitually cheats but a gill of grain, or a cent at a time, has the same dishonest principle and views. He might be alarmed and deterred from taking a large sum dishonestly, or all that any man possessed. But let his base heart insinuate that a man is wealthy, and that the loss of a thousand dollars would be a mere trifle; if he should have opportunity to cheat or over-reach without any means of detection, quickly would his avarice

grasp the dishonest gain. And let the same person be brought to want, he might be more odious and more to be dreaded, than the arraigned criminal. The only difference between the most secret and trifling dishonesty, and the most open and daring robbery, is merely circumstantial. The principle is the same ; for he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. A change of condition, and the depravity of the human heart, would be sufficient to lead such a one into the most enormous crimes. Then, when overt acts disgrace any of our fellow-mortals, let us inquire of our own hearts, if we cherish the secret lurking of such a principle in our breasts.

3dly. *This subject may serve to shew, that though the gain of sin be small, the guilt may be great.*

One* great principle to be inferred from the text, is, that he who has sinned, though to a small amount in respect to the fruit or profit of the transgression, has, by so doing, incurred a full condemnation. He who has just passed over a forbidden limit, which was distinctly known to him, is unfaithful in the least, and is also guilty in much. For a vindication of this, it is evident, that by a small act of fraud, the line which separates the right from the wrong, is just as effectually broken over, as by a great act of injustice. The Saviour, in the words of the text, speaks to the man who is only half an inch within the limit of forbidden ground, in the very same terms by which he addresses the one who has made the farthest and the largest excursions over the boundary. Grant that he is but a little way upon the wrong side of the line of demarkation ; but why is he upon it at all ? It was in the act of crossing that line, that he entered upon the contest between right and wrong ; and then it was decided. That was the instant of time at which principle struck her surrender. The great difficulty was to pass the partition wall ; for after

* The remainder of this discourse is chiefly from Dr. Chalmers.

that was done, the moral principle has no barriers to obstruct his progress over the whole extent of the forbidden field but what may be easily surmounted. If he is but a little way within the unlawful territory, even upon its margin, the God who finds him there, will reckon and deal with him as a bold transgressor.

In the words of the text, the Saviour has taken his stand on the mere dividing line between what is lawful and what is unlawful ; and he gives us to understand, that the man who enters by a single footstep on the forbidden ground, immediately contaminates his person with the full hue and character of guiltiness. He does not make the difference between right and wrong to consist in a gradual shading of the one into the other ; and thus obliterate the distinctions of morality. He allows no imperceptible intermixture between the nature and margin of virtue and vice ; but gives a clear and decided delineation. It is not a gentle transition for a man to step over from honesty to dishonesty, and from truth to falsehood. There is between them a wall, rising up unto heaven ; and the authority of God must suffer violence, ere one inch of entrance can be made into the field of iniquity. The Saviour never glosses over the beginning of crimes. His object is effectually to fortify the limit, to cast a rampart of exclusion around the whole territory of guilt, and to rear it before the eye of man in such characters of strength and sacredness, as should make him feel that it is impregnable.

Again : We may see, that he who is unfaithful in the least, has incurred the condemnation of him who is unfaithful in much ; because the littleness of the gain, so far from lessening the guilt, is in fact rather a circumstance of aggravation. It is certain that he who has committed injustice for the sake of a less advantage, has done it on the impulse of a less temptation. He has parted with his honesty at an inferior price, by bartering it for a mere trifle.

And does this lessen his guilt ? Certainly it proves how small is the price which he sets upon his eternity ; and how cheaply he can bargain away the favour of God, and an inheritance in glory. And the more paltry the traffick is in respect of sinful gain, the more profane it may be as it relates to principle. It likens him the more to profane Esau, who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage.

The piercing eye of Him who looketh down from heaven, and pondereth the secrets of every breast, perceives that the man who is abhorrent only in the view of flagrant acts of injustice, has no justice whatever in his character. It is at the precise limit between the right and the wrong that the flaming sword of God's law is placed. This is strikingly evident in the instance of the first sin that entered the world. What is it that swells the eating of the forbidden fruit with a grandeur so momentous ? How came an action in itself so minute, to be the germe of such mighty consequences ? How are we to conceive that our first parents, by one act of disobedience, brought death upon themselves and their posterity ? By the eating of the forbidden fruit, a clear requisition or distinct prohibition was broken. A transition was made from loyalty to rebellion ; and an entrance was effected into the kingdom of Satan. If the act itself was a trifle, it served to aggravate the guilt ; that, for such a trifle, the authority of God could be despised and set at defiance. And now, if for a single transaction, all the felicity of paradise had to be broken up, and the wretched offenders to be turned abroad upon a world, now changed by the curse into a wilderness ; and all the woes with which earth is filled, be the direful consequence, let us not hesitate to believe, That he who is unfaithful in that which is least, contracts great guilt ; and for the sake of a little gain, incurs an aggravated condemnation.

4thly. *We may also see, that he who is faithful in that which is least, is entitled to the highest praise.*

In respect both of righteous principle and practice, such a one is, and ought to be considered, as being faithful in that which is much. Who is the man, my hearers, to whom you would most readily confide the whole of your property? He who would disdain to put forth an injurious hand on a single farthing. Of whom would you have the least dread of any unrighteous encroachment? He is the one, all the delicacies of whose principles are awakened when he comes within sight of the dividing limit which separates justice from injustice. Who is the man whom we shall never find among the greater degrees of iniquity? He who shrinks, with sacred abhorrence, from its smallest degree. Nobleness of condition in life, is not essential as a state for nobleness of character: nor does a man require to be high in office, to gather round his person the worth and lustre of a high minded integrity. Humble life may be as rich in moral grace and moral grandeur, as the loftier places of society and refinement. True dignity of principle may be cherished in the breast of a man of the lowest drudgery, as well as in the bosom of him who stands entrusted with the fortunes of an empire. Moreover, that man has the brightest Christian character who conscientiously observes all the punctilioes of godliness. It is in an humble, and almost unnoticed walk, that he can most effectually prove to his God and his own conscience, that he is a Christian. Hence, "the secret walk, the private acts of men, if noble, far the noblest of their lives." And to be faithful in those things that are little, gives the most incontestable evidence, that a man is faithful in that which is much; and consequently entitled to the highest esteem and commendation from his fellow-men, and the peculiar smiles and approbation of his God.

SERMON XXII.

THE DIVINE DISPENSATIONS PROGRESSIVE.

DANIEL XII. 4.

Knowledge shall be increased.

THE dispensation of our present state of existence, is unfolded by maturing gradations, emerging from chaotick elements. The works of creation, of providence, and of human improvement, do not only manifest a diversified series of advancement, but their commencement does also exhibit a confused origin, founded in embryos and chaos. In both the natural and moral world, the system of progression is evolved by producing great results from minute causes.

The *globe* on which we dwell, was not completed in a moment; it experienced an advance of important appendages during six days. On the first day the heavens and the earth were created as a general, disordered mass, regulated, however, by the succession of light and darkness. The second day witnessed the firmament or atmosphere, arising in the confused watery element, to separate the water appertaining to the earth, from that contained in the clouds. On the third day the lower waters are collected into their appointed channels; and the dry land appears, producing grass, plants, and trees. The glorious sun, the beautiful moon, and shining stars, come forth in majestick train to adorn the fourth day. On the fifth day the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, were brought into existence. During the sixth day, all the other ani-

mals were produced ; and man, the last and noblest being, was made as the height of the gradation, and the completion of the present, visible system of creation.

Should we trace the divine operations in the *system of providence*, a similar method of procedure would be obvious. The process in both the vegetable and animal creation, exhibits the same analogy. A grain of wheat, committed to the earth, vegetates, and becomes an exuberant stalk, laden with rich abundance. The little acorn, buried for a time, at first emerges a tender sprout, but in the progress of years, under the fostering hand of Heaven, is extended into a mighty oak—the monarch of the forest. And what wonderful gradations in the developement of many species of insects.—Every animal is raised by a diversity of growth and series of maturity. Even the lion, the king of beasts, has his origin in minuteness and imbecility. Man, in his infantile state, is merely a human being in miniature; yet how pleasing and interesting to see the faculties of a little child expand, and to witness the matured nobleness of both the bodily improvement and mental accomplishments of manhood.

If we advert to the *system of divine revelation*, we shall see that the inspired messages were communicated, at different periods, and that the sacred volume is composed of numerous parts appended, and gradually completed, analogous to the other works of the divine Being. To our first parents, whilst in their primeval, and also in their fallen state, did the Lord disclose such important and special truths, as were consonant to their entirely varied condition. The patriarchs and prophets, a diversity of writers in distant places and different ages of the world, composed their several assigned parts, which complete the volume of the Old Testament. The predicted Messiah, after this period, makes his appearance, and a new dispensation is introduced.

The communications of the Saviour, the evangelists, and apostles, comprise the doctrines and manifold facts recorded in the New Testament, which, connected to the old, consummates the principles and historical narrations of revealed religion.

Human improvement rests also on the same basis of progression, whether we consider man as an individual, or in a collective capacity. The acquisition of knowledge, and the posts of advancement are manifold in the community. Any human being does not only reach the height of useful attainments from a series of efforts and the progress of years; but every nation must have the experience of ages, to attain distinction by invention, amendment, and completeness. Yet, how often are the fairest prospects of any people blighted; and their glory exchanged for a reproach, in consequence of wars, pestilence, and other desolations which, from time to time, have overwhelmed the habitable parts of our world. But these desolating changes, the downfall of kingdoms, that have risen to eminence, will not continue always. There will be a time of peace and general prosperity, when the earth will be restored in a measure to its pristine state.

The query may arise, What evidence we have of the truth of this proposition. I answer, if we advert merely to what is past, or to the present character of man, *none*. The consideration of either of the above sources, would present the same dreary picture of wretchedness and ruin, which have, as yet, in all ages, destroyed the fondest hopes of individuals and nations. To the sure word of prophecy we must go, and on the unerring word of divine truth must we found all our expectations of a brighter state of things. The truths which may be derived from the words of the text and its connexion, afford us ground of encouragement.

The writings of Daniel include a series of prophetick events, deduced from his time, till the complete establishment of Christ's kingdom on the earth.

In these latter days, many have bestowed great exertions, in searching into history, to illustrate those parts of the prophecies that are already accomplished, and in comparing them with other scriptures, to form some judgement of what yet remains to be fulfilled; and thus much light has been reflected on this subject. And, as the divine predictions shall the more fully terminate in their accomplishment, so future generations will enjoy greater advantages than we, to be edified by them.

The present subject exhibits one of great means, by which this desirable end will be effected. Daniel, looking forward with a prophetick eye, exclaims, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." This declaration doubtless refers to the future spread of the gospel, by the active labours of faithful ministers, which will prepare the way for the completion of the remaining prophecies by the extensive dissemination of divine truth. And many heralds of the cross are traversing our own country, and going forth to barbarous climes to publish the glad tidings of salvation. This idea is aptly exemplified in the system of circuits of itinerant preachers.

All kinds of useful knowledge will eventually be much more effectually disseminated, the methods of improvement greatly multiplied, and the state of human society highly elevated. The number of missionaries will be increased, till they go to all the ends of the earth, or to every destitute portion of our globe. Men eminently skilled in the arts and sciences, or in some of the mechanical branches of publick utility, will find it for their interest, as well as for the advantage of the community, to visit different places; and thus the opportunities of improvement will be accelerated, and useful inventions perfected.

The earth itself, in a political point of view, will eventually be wonderfully improved. The methods of journeying by land and water, have not

yet reached their height of perfection. Our roads, bridges, canals, and railways, are as yet in their state of imperfection. The regulation and beauty of our cities, the cultivation of the fields, and general plans of benevolence, are even at this day, in their infancy. But, before the end of time, the whole world will present the appearance of the garden of the Lord. If a messenger from the celestial regions should be sent, at this era, to survey every part of this globe, as to its natural, civil, and moral condition, and then this same personage, a thousand years hence, accidentally should make a similar tour, he would conceive that his journey was to some new world.

That such will be the desirable and prosperous state of things in the course of the millennial glory of the church, the revealed will of God abundantly attests. From the fact that peace will universally prevail, and that combined and successful operations will generally abound, these blessed results may be anticipated. What improvements have been made in these United States, within the short space of the last twenty years ! What wonderful inventions of utility have been displayed, and are now in efficient operation ! Let this commencement of ingenious and benevolent efforts be continued without interruption for a few centuries, what a change would be effected on the very face of nature, and how would human society be greatly exalted !

The increasing attention of the present day to send a copy of the sacred scriptures to every family, and the active measures to furnish ministers to preach the gospel, are auspicious tokens, that the whole world will eventually be christianized. And how have laudable inventions been multiplying in relation to both agriculture and commerce ! The wonderfully encouraging success of the temperance society, begins to proclaim that the life of man will be prolonged. The system of infantile

instruction affords cheering evidence of an improving state of intellectual and moral culture. Though as yet in its rudiments, it is well adapted to the corporeal and mental capacities of a little child.

Elementary books and judicious modes of teaching will doubtless be so much improved and increased, that children will be more understandingly instructed in the various useful arts and sciences, and at an earlier age. Within thirty years past, there has been more than fivefold advance as to the facility of acquiring the knowledge of geography. The advantages arising from the combined means of sabbath schools, have elevated children, in point of privilege, far above their parents and ancestors, as it relates to general and particular information, derived from the holy scriptures. And the methods of teaching other departments of literature, and of disseminating knowledge in general, are gradually becoming more elevated as it respects apparatus, skill, and efficiency.

At present, comparatively few of the nations of the earth enjoy the enlightening beams of the gospel and science. Many are yet in a state of barbarous manners, and have scarcely begun to emerge from their customs of barbarity, and to raise the standard of civilization. And indeed the most exalted nation, in point of the climax of its perfection, enjoys only the feeble glimmerings of the morning's dawn, compared to the effulgence of noon day. Agricultural, commercial, and mechanical pursuits and inventions, are demanding increasing attention from the publick; but discoveries and improvements innumerable will yet spring to light in relation to each of these arts, to facilitate their operation and benefit mankind. Parental discipline, and the management of children in common schools, will yet be much better understood. Literature, the civil law, and christianity, will be gra-

dually unfolding, and exert a more powerful and mutual influence to elevate and bless individuals and nations.

How desirable have been the situation and prospects of some parts of the habitable world for certain periods ! But the most highly favoured portions of the globe, have as yet enjoyed only partially the blessings in reserve for the glorious day of millenial glory. God's chosen people Israel, and every nation in christian lands, have experienced the judgements of internal and external commotions, and comparatively few of the inhabitants of any country have been persons of vital piety. But how will the scene be changed, and prospects gloriously brightened, when all mankind shall taste the sweets of peace without interruption, and all shall know the Lord, from the least, even unto the greatest!

At the present day, many important events and measures conspire as preparatory to the introducing of superiour blessings to the church and world. Among these the improved system of teaching little children is eminent, as it is so well adapted to their tender age, to their bodily, their mental, and moral culture. Let this novel and highly interesting method be introduced into families, and into our common schools, and what happy results would redound to the rising generation, and especially to future ages. Whilst the prospects of individuals would be brightened, the state of society would be renovated, as it relates to its intellectual, civil, and religious condition. Infantile years would be happily improved, knowledge generally increased, and mankind enjoy greater advantages for distinguished attainments, and for spheres of more extensive usefulness.

The proverb is true, That learning without labour is granted to none; but still advances are making, and will continue to be made, to diminish the difficulties in the education of children and

youth, to increase important aids and methods for their instruction, and thus have a better foundation laid for their improvement in manhood. An important change is beginning to be effected in relation to this interesting subject, which is to render study a delight, and not the burden of the youthful mind. And when the habits and morals of society and of the world shall be essentially amended, the natural tendency will be to elevate human genius, to lessen and alleviate the calamities of life, and to diffuse health, prosperity, and happiness, throughout all the ranks and abodes of the great family of man.

A word, relative to the instructing of a little child. Let his senses be exercised in that manner which is adapted to convey to the mind interesting ideas of the forms, qualities, relations, and purposes of the various objects which surround him. Lead him by gentle steps to the threshold of the temple of science, and unfold its treasures by clear and intelligent communications. Direct his attention to the grand, the beautiful, and variegated scenery, both of the system of creation and providence, and of divine revelation. Arrest his curiosity, and excite his admiration by some of the interesting details of geography, history, and the several branches of natural philosophy. Let all kinds of useful knowledge be imparted in a rational, distinct, and alluring method, and it will be received with eagerness, and an ardent desire gradually excited to make further investigations into the wonders of both divine and human operations. If a parent be apt to teach, if he teach his child aright, he will be solicited abundantly for instruction.

And now it will be granted, that if knowledge and benevolence were increased so as to form a prominent and universal trait in the character of mankind, happiness would be extensively diffused throughout our wretched world. Even in those places where only a few energetick and benevo-

lent individuals unite their efforts in the cause of general philanthropy, what a wonderful change is quickly effected to ameliorate and elevate the condition of society! But before the end of time, multitudes of such characters will be produced throughout this terraqueous globe, to prove a blessing to the whole human family, and they will shine as the stars dispersed in every part of the canopy of heaven.

In the meridian of millenial glory most of the evils, both physical and moral, which now affect the world, will be either abolished, or greatly mitigated. If all the sorrows and wretchedness produced by the vices of mankind, were extirpated, few afflictions would remain besides the incidental evils which occasionally flow from the elements of nature. And even these will be greatly diminished by the benevolent operations of art, directed by the discoveries of science. By clearing the surface of the globe of immense forests, by draining stagnant marshes, and by the universal cultivation of the soil, and innumerable other improvements, the seasons will be meliorated, and storms and tempests deprived of their wonted violence. Moreover, the partial remaining evils will be almost annihilated to the sufferer, by the sympathy and tenderness from the kind, fostering hand of universal beneficence.

"Every useful invention, every new instrument for investigating the operations of nature, every new discovery in the earth, or in the heavens, every exploration of an unknown region of the globe, every branch of commerce and manufacture, every new mode of facilitating labour and improving the productions of the soil; every improvement in the ease and rapidity of travelling, and of conveying intelligence from one region to another, and every art and science, will, before the end of time, be consecrated to the service of God, and to the accomplishment of the objects of general benevolence. One grand diffusive principle, manifesting itself in

numberless ramifications, will pervade the whole mass of society ; and one grand aim, the honour and glory of the Creator, and the universal diffusion of happiness in every direction, and among every rank of sentient and intelligent beings, will be the unceasing endeavour of men of all nations, and kindreds, and languages. The great mass of this world's inhabitants will appear like one vast army marching forward in harmony to the regions of bliss, every one, in his appointed order, passing in peace and tranquillity through the gates of death, to join the general assembly above, and to augment and enliven the congregation of the heavens."

REMARKS.

1st. *The sacred scriptures constitute a blessed volume.*

They the most effectually unfold the declarative glory of God, whilst they point guilty and wretched man to a medium of reconciliation and a state of everlasting blessedness. They are not only authentick records of important facts during the former ages of the world, but they also disclose those events and glorious truths which are yet to be accomplished. They unveil to us what has been, and what will be the state of the church, before the end of time.

But, without the volume of divine revelation in our hands, what answer could we make to the question, if the condition of the world would ever be essentially better ? In sullen despair the christian and the philosopher would be constrained to answer, *no*. Avarice, perfidy, oppression, and cruelty, will forever blight our cheering prospects of brighter days. Fate has destined this earth to perpetual desolations, and to be drenched with human gore. An Alexander with numerous armies will soon hurl his weapons of destruction through surrounding nations, to gratify a mad ambition, and to obtain the eulogy of a hero. Then a Xerxes,

fired with pride, and with the lust of dominion, will lead forth his army of three millions of infatuated beings for mutual slaughter and devastation. A race of Neros will ere long spring up to trample on the laws of nature and society, and prove a scourge and an execration to mankind.

But, with the holy bible in one hand, we may raise the other towards heaven, in the attitude of thanksgiving, and bless the Father of mercies for this precious treasure. With an eye of faith, we may look forward and behold both the natural and moral world, exhibiting a far more desirable scenery than the present. We may see profanity, intemperance, murder, and the host of vices and crimes, leaving the abodes of men.—In their stead, peace, philanthropy, and the blessed effects of the religion of Jesus Christ, abounding.

2dly. The present state is preparatory to other dispensations.

As man is a being, compounded of soul and body, so is he destined an inhabitant not only of this, but also of another world. And he is a creature highly exalted in the great scale of existence; since eternity alone is sufficient for the attainment of his highest perfection. In the present state, sensitive, intellectual, and moral objects, engage his attention, and by their influence form his character, by which he may foresee his future destiny. Hence, highly important then the inquiry to every individual, How shall man attain the great end of his being? How shall time, with all its diversified scenes, render perfect his nature, and be the happy agent of ushering him into a glorious immortality? to other dispensations, and to more exalted and extensive spheres of action and beneficence?

“When we look forward to that eternal state to which we are destined—when we consider, that, after thousands of millions of centuries shall have run their rounds, eternity will be no nearer to a termination, and that ages, numerous as the drops

of the ocean, will still roll on in interminable succession—we behold a lapse of duration, and a succession of events stretching out before us, which correspond with the immeasurable spaces of the universe, and the number and magnitude of the worlds with which it is stored. When we view ourselves as thus connected with the immensity of creation on the one hand, and with infinite duration on the other; and when we reflect on the numerous changes that have happened both in the physical and moral aspect of our globe, within the period of six thousand years, we cannot but conclude, that we are destined to pass through new scenes and changes in that eternity which lies before us, of which, at present, we can form no conception.

"The righteous, after remaining for thousands of millions of years in that world which will be prepared for them at the general resurrection, may be transported to another system as far distant from that abode, as we now are from the most distant stars visible to our sight, in order to contemplate new displays of the attributes of God in another province of his empire. They may afterwards be conveyed to an unoccupied region of immensity, where new creations, displaying new objects of glory and magnificence, are starting into existence. Probably they will be invested with the wings of a seraph, and be enabled to wing their way, in company with angels, from world to world, and to visit the most distant regions of that immense universe over which Omnipotence presides. In short, we can set no limits to their excursions, when we attempt to survey the revolutions and changes that may take place, and the new scenes of glory which may burst upon the view throughout the lapse of a duration which will have no end. And their future blessedness rests upon a foundation stable and permanent as the throne of the Eternal."

SERMON XXIII.

MAN'S OPPOSITION TO CHRIST GROUNDLESS.

JOHN XV. 25.

They hated me without a cause.

WHilst the Jews entertained the belief, that the blessed Redeemer had a supreme regard for their national and personal welfare, they cried, Hosannah to the son of David. But when they formed some just conceptions of his true character, and the design of his coming into the world, their selfish love was turned into hatred. The holiness of the life, and the purity of the doctrines, taught by the Saviour, made their hearts rise against him.

And are we to conclude, that the Jews were sinners above all men, because they exercised hatred towards Christ? I answer, nay. The principles and feelings, by which they were actuated, in this instance, are common to all men. Similar circumstances and views would draw forth from the heart of any human being, opposition of the same nature.

But the only Mediator between God and man, exclaimed, "They hated me without a cause." Hence, we are taught, that mankind are opposed to the only Being, who can save them, and that, without any just ground. But the multitude must be convinced of this affecting truth, by arguments, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God, or they will not realize, that they are possessed of hatred towards their only Redeemer.

1st. *That they are, appears from the very nature of sin.*

The moral character of Christ is perfect holiness and benevolence; but that of mankind is entirely sinful and selfish. Hence, the sacred scriptures represent sin to be as much opposed to holiness, as light is to darkness. The reason is obvious, for a holy temper is in direct opposition to one that is sinful; and a selfish spirit is the contrast of one that is benevolent.

Then, if men are insensible that they are opposed to Christ, their only Saviour, it must be, that they are ignorant of his true character, as were the Jews; before they understood the nature and design of his divine mission. Some do imagine, that God the Father is all justice, and that his Son is all mercy. But such a supposition is unscriptural, and a dangerous delusion. The Father is as merciful as the Son; and the Son is as strict in justice as the Father. Christ is no more benevolent, or friendly towards sinners, than God the Father; and they both hate them for all their sins, with the most holy and perfect hatred.

Impenitent sinners would not be opposed to the divine Redeemer, if he would regard their personal welfare more than the authority and glory of the infinite God. But the thought, that Christ shall judge the world, at the last great day, and sentence all his, and his Father's enemies, to everlasting destruction, is painful to the unrenewed heart. And lest mankind should deceive themselves in relation to this point, the Saviour has declared, concerning those who hear the gospel, "Ye have both seen and hated, both me and my Father."

Christ hates the impenitent for every wicked thought, word, and deed; and they hate him, because he is opposed to all their unholy doings, and condemns them in all their moral conduct, and for all their unbelief in the whole truth of God. The Jews, like many at this day, vainly imagined, they had sincere love to the Saviour, and that they were of the number of his most cordial friends. But

criminality must be imputed to gospel sinners, who remain ignorant of his true character, and of the secret selfishness of their own hearts, for they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. When we consider, that Christ is as holy and just as his Father, that they are one in nature, in design, and government, we may see from the very nature of sin, that sinners are possessed of hatred towards him.

2dly. *The same is evident from their treatment of Christ.*

When the Saviour, who was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, "came to his own, his own received him not." But why did they not receive him? Because they did not love him, nor the doctrines he taught. They were opposed to the holy character, and to the chief end, or supreme object of the Son of God, their only Saviour; therefore was he despised and rejected of men.

Mankind did not only exercise malignant feelings towards Christ, when he was upon earth; but they spake all manner of wicked and unfriendly things concerning him. Their hatred was acted out by various deeds of cruelty, by persecuting him, and even seeking his life. They called him a blasphemer, compared him to a disciple and agent of Beelzebub, and treated him with open contempt and ridicule. They falsely accused him, buffeted him, spit upon him, and smote him with the palms of their hands. They crowned him with thorns by way of contempt; and at last, to show the strength and inveteracy of their hatred, they nailed him to the cross. Say they, "This is the heir, come, let us kill him." Thus was the Son of God treated by a race of men, whose hearts were not more desperately wicked and opposed to him, than those of the present age.

If any imagine, they could not have thus acted towards the only Saviour of sinners, let such remember, that his most bitter enemies, among the

Jews, thought they could not have persecuted and killed God's holy prophets, as their forefathers had done. Reader and hearer, be candid and faithful to your own souls. The conduct of the Jews is held up before you as a true glass, into which you are entreated to look, and examine critically, and see yourself impartially. You are beings as depraved as they, as prone to be under the influence of the same selfish and unreasonable views, and to be as guilty of unnatural and criminal deeds. In view of the treatment, which Christ has actually received from sinners, to whom he came as an all sufficient and only Saviour, we see they are possessed of hatred towards him.

3dly. *The same appears from their treatment of his commands.*

Men give evidence of their being the friends of Christ, by keeping his commands; and they do also exhibit undeniable evidence of their being his enemies, by constantly rejecting them. Thus, servants prove their loyalty to their masters, by cheerfully obeying their requisitions; and they give practical evidence of their disaffection by the neglecting of their service. And now, let me ask, What is the united language of mankind, by their conduct in view of the directions and authority of the Saviour? It is precisely that of the Jews, when they were reproved by Christ, as the enemies of his Father, and for their unbelief in him; and were exhorted to immediate repentance for all their sins of heart and life against God, and to receive him as their only Saviour. They cried out, We will not have this man reign over us.

How many of you, who hear the gospel, are now saying in your hearts, Let the divine Redeemer deliver us from the wrath to come, but we pray him to have us excused from now coming to the gospel feast. Let him permit us to love ourselves, and the enjoyments of the world, supremely, for a time. Let not our souls be pained to think, of de-

nying ourselves, and giving up all immediately for the sake of following him. The unrenewed heart exclaims, What is there in the Saviour, so much to be desired, that I should esteem his commands and service as my delight? Yea, how frequently does some trifling pleasure, some sinful enjoyment, or insignificant pittance of this world, have more weight in the affections and practice of men, than the commands and friendship of Christ! How do perishing sinners, for whom the son of God shed his precious blood, violate his most reasonable requisitions, deny him in all their ways; and thus, Judas like, sell their Saviour for nought! And can such profess friendship to Christ? Is this their kindness to their friend; to despise his entreaties, and spurn his love! This every sinner is continually doing, so long as he resists the terms of the gospel.

4thly. *If mankind were not possessed of hatred towards Christ, their only Saviour, they would not make light of his astonishing work for their redemption.*

What wondrous things has the divine Redeemer done to open a door of mercy to a fallen world. What a glorious righteousness has he wrought, and atoning sufferings endured, for the apostate race of Adam, that there might be a possibility of their being delivered from the damnation of hell, consistently with the honour of the divine law and the righteous government of God. But his unparalleled, holy, and benevolent life, his dreadful agonies and ignominious death, have little effect on the minds of men. They make light of redeeming love, which was stronger than death, and trample, as it were, under foot, the blood of the Son of God, and their only Mediator. But could any of this guilty, perish ing world, thus trifle with such amazing deeds, unless they had a dislike to his holy character, and were displeased with the self-denying duties which he inculcated? If sinners were friendly to the Saviour, and not opposed to his true character, how

differently would they be affected on the account of what he has done in their behalf. Men do not readily forget any important service rendered them, or self-denying hardships endured on their account, by an earthly friend. Why then are they not deeply impressed, animated, and most tenderly contrite, under a sense of what their heavenly friend, the Lord of glory, has done, and with unequalled benevolence endured to save them from sin and death? The answer is parallel with the question, They are possessed of hatred towards their only Redeemer.

5thly. *Let us notice some of the express declarations of the holy scriptures.*

The Saviour, speaking of the Jews, and of their scriptures, says, "This cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled, that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."

The Jews generally rejected the Messiah, when he came; and this was not for the want of evidence of his being the very person who was predicted in their law, that should come. The grand reason was, they hated his true character, they hated his perfectly holy life, and they hated the supreme purity of his doctrines. So long as they entertained false views of the divine Redeemer, and of the nature of his kingdom, they were enkindled with raptures of transport, and broke out into joyous exultations of selfish love. But when they were enlightened, respecting his great design in coming into the world, they were greatly enraged against him.

The words of the pious Psalmist, under the prophetick view of the Redeemer, who would be rejected of men, despised, and smitten, are, "They that hate me without a cause, are more than the hairs of my head; they that would destroy me being mine enemies wrongfully. They compassed me about also with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. For my love they

are my adversaries ; they have rewarded me evil for good."

It is said, concerning the multitude, when they formed some correct conceptions respecting the person and purposes of Christ, " That they prayed him to depart out of their coasts." They could not endure to have one, who was the express image of the Holy One of Israel, or of God the Father, dwell among them.

The divine Redeemer knew, when he was upon the earth, that he had but few true disciples and real friends, and that he had many enemies. He designed that mankind should view the subject in the same light, therefore he declared, " He that is not with me, is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." He taught, that all who were not cordially engaged in his cause, and devoted supremely to his Father's honour and service, were his opposers. None can be indifferent in this matter ; for if they do not espouse the truth as it is in Jesus, they are enlisted under the banners of the enemy, and stand and fight in his ranks.

I proceed, *secondly*, to show that all the hatred of sinners towards Christ, is without any just ground.

1st. *There is nothing in the character of Christ, that affords any ground for them to hate him.*

If we contemplate his character as God, we are abundantly taught, that he possesses all the adorable and amiable perfections of the infinitely blessed Jehovah. Christ is not only expressly called God in many instances, but the same natural and moral attributes, that are ascribed to the Father, are attributed to the Son also. Now, if there is nothing in the person of the eternal God, which men ought to hate, there can be nothing in the character of Christ which they ought to hate, as it respects his divinity ; for St. John declares concerning the Son, " This is the true God."

Neither is there any thing in the character of

Christ, as man, for which they ought to hate him. The person, who is called the man Christ Jesus, is essentially different from other men as it relates to his moral character; for he is holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners. Although the Saviour, in his humanity, had animal nature, which was sometimes refreshed from food, and, at other times, hungry and thirsty and weary; and although his human soul became exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, yet he knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. He obeyed, and suffered, the just for the unjust. Though he was despised and set at naught by men, there was nothing vile in him, no moral blemish in his character, for which he deserved such treatment.

When the sacred oracles make mention of Christ's divinity, they represent him in a light so glorious, that it is no robbery for him to claim equality with God; and when they speak concerning his humanity, he is set forth spotless in righteousness, the meek and lowly Jesus. What, then, can be ascribed to the character of Christ, the only Saviour of sinners, for which they can be justified in hating him?

2dly. Christ's coming into the world in his true character as a Redeemer, affords no just ground for their hatred.

God the Son would never have become manifest in the flesh, to redeem mankind from sin and hell, by his atoning sacrifice, had they not been in a condition so guilty and wretched, that they could not possibly be saved from the wrath to come, without the shedding of his precious blood. He would never have appeared in the character of a Mediator, had men been free from sin, and not exposed to the holy and inflexible justice of Heaven. The glorious economy of human redemption called him to this arduous work. Hence the glory of the eternal God in the display of his unbounded grace and astonishing mercy towards a lost world, was what

induced Jesus, the Lord of Glory, to interfere as a Saviour, and proffer himself as a ransom for fallen man.

Amazing the condescension! that the son of God should so humble himself as to become personally united to a human soul and body, that he by his obedience, even unto death, might redeem heirs of hell, and exalt them as the favourites of heaven! Had not the human family been in circumstances of perishing need of such a Redeemer, were not their condition otherwise hopeless, Christ would never have appeared in that character. Then why should any hate the only Mediator between God and man, the only person on the account of whom they can be saved?

3dly. *There is nothing in the conduct of Christ, that affords the least ground for men to hate him.*

All his actions were the result of the most perfect wisdom and goodness. There was nothing in all he did, either in his life or death, for which he deserved to be blamed. His reproving the world of sin, and denouncing the most dreadful woes against impenitent, unbelieving sinners, were not only the most solemn, but the most friendly warnings. Christ's zeal and hatred, and his sayings, which were called hard, flowed from a holy and perfectly benevolent heart. In his life was exhibited a perfect example, and the only pattern of perfection for the sons of men. And when his hour was come, in which God's violated holy law was to be made honourable by his laying down his life, he, though in great agony, and sweating as it were great drops of blood, was voluntarily led as a lamb to the slaughter.

The Saviour, though a man, had also the right to act with the authority of God; for he was both God and man, having the distinct natures of divinity and humanity united in one person. On some occasions it was proper for him to exhibit a spirit of meekness, and on others the prerogative of the Most High. Hence all his motives, and every thing

which he did in his Mediatorial character, were perfectly reconcilable and most worthy as it respects either the glory of God, or the salvation of man. And although many were displeased and enraged in view of the sayings and actions of Christ, yet there was nothing in all his conduct towards the sons of men, which laid any just ground for any one to hate him.

4thly. *There is nothing in Christ's doctrines and requisitions, which affords any just ground for men to hate him.*

The doctrines which he taught were truth itself. The perfections of God, the divine law, the character and condition of man, and the future state of rewards and punishments, were set forth in a clear and true light, by him who is the way, the truth, and the life. He never gave a misrepresentation of any being; and all things which he proposed as matters of faith, were described with the greatest simplicity and the most perfect consistency.

All the requisitions of the Saviour were of a nature the most suitable and reasonable. It was proper for him to command men every where to repent, and believe in him, as the only being by whom they could be saved. His benevolence was manifest in requiring self-denial of men, even the giving up of all things for his sake; for this was a gracious test of the genuineness of their religion; and designed to prevent their being deceived respecting their eternal salvation.

Christ never promulgated any principle, nor taught any duty, derogatory to the true God; and had he not represented the character and condition of man in the light he has done, he would have been unfaithful and a deceiver. The straight, the perfect, and the only consistent course, he pursued through his whole life, that his Father might be honoured and rebel man saved. And what more could men wish? What would they have? Why should they hate and oppose truth itself?

INFERENCES.

1st. *Those impenitent sinners must be deceived, who think they have no hatred towards Christ.*

It has been shown in several respects, from arguments the most conclusive and undeniable, that they do, and have, and will continue to hate him, as long as they remain in a state of impenitence and irreconcilation to God. And, if any are insensible in relation to this affecting truth, they cannot ascribe their blindness to the want of evidence, or to the deficiency of gospel light. The true reason is, they willingly resist its saving power ; they do not choose to feel the effects of its enlightening influence.

Do any of my impenitent readers or hearers, wish to know, whether they are for or against the Saviour ? I would ask, do you live to yourselves supremely, or to Christ ? Do you bear the gospel credentials of love ? or its most decisive characteristicks of hatred ? Are your lives those of obedience, or of manifest disobedience ? Does the epithet, the enemies of Christ and his gospel, grate on your ears ? What are the grounds of any true hope, from the unerring word of truth, that you are his friends ?

As the Jews sported with the dying agonies of their Redeemer, and called upon him, " If thou be the Christ, come down from the cross, and save thyself," so the same spirit would lead them, if it were possible, to enter the court of heaven, hurl the Son of God from his throne, and crucify him afresh. Says impenitence, Away with this man, this Mediator, who is over all, God blessed forever, rather than to submit to him, and live for him, or else be condemned by him.

2dly. *How malignant is the nature of sin !*

What deadly hatred, what a chilling, fatal influence, to be opposed to the greatest and best of beings ! As Christ possesses all possible perfections, both human and divine, so to be disaffected towards his perfect and all glorious Mediatorial cha-

racter, discovers the vileness of the human heart, and the guilt of human beings.

It is vain for man to endeavour to extenuate his wickedness, and not to feel and confess his guiltiness. If enlightened, gospel sinners, do indeed hate the Son of God, if they are opposed to the only being, by whom they can be saved, they cannot boast, nor need they say, they are inferiour to fallen angels in point of moral depravity and ill desert.

3dly. *Wisdom admonishes every impenitent sinner to repent, and submit to Christ.*

If there is nothing in his character, for which he should be opposed ; and if he is an all glorious prophet, priest, and king, and Mediator, let rebellion cease, and Christ be received as all and in all. When the blessed Jesus exclaimed, “They hated me without a cause,” he viewed it as the immediate duty of the Jews, who hated him, to embrace him as their God and Saviour. As if he had said, “Your hearts and actions are against me, the Lord of glory, O cruel people; but you ought immediately to repent of this, your wickedness, and become my disciples.”

Impenitent sinner, be persuaded then, with a godly sorrow for all your sins, to turn from them, and continue no longer your disaffection towards the King of heaven. Why should men, for the mere trifles of a moment, sell their Saviour from day to day ? Why should almost any thing engage their attention and affections, rather than the only being by whom they can be saved ? Let me tell you, impenitent reader and hearer, the blessed Jesus does not deserve such treatment. Your souls, which you are voluntarily the more and more enslaving and binding, by the strengthening bands of continued impenitence, are so valuable, so unspeakably precious, that they cannot be redeemed, except by the invaluable ransom, the only efficacious purchase of the blood of the Son of God.

SERMON XXIV

THE MALIGNITY OF SIN.

ROMANS VII. 13.

That sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful.

The apostle Paul, in this chapter, shows, that by the law is the knowledge of sin; which, when set home upon the conscience and heart, leads mankind to see themselves guilty and ruined. On another occasion, to his christian brethren, he says, "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." That is, it brings men to a sense of their own hearts, as exceeding odious, and rendering them highly criminal in the sight of God. When the law is applied in its spirituality, the sinner becomes dead, or gives up all hopes of acceptance and justification in the sight of God by the deeds of the law.

The apostle thus interrogates in relation to this subject: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?—God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died—And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy,

and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me?—God forbid—But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

The commandment penetrated the motives of the heart, and condemned the apostle for the secret workings of his mind, and set his sins in order before him. They appear as an invisible, but innumerable host, in hostile array, aiming weapons of death at the very King of heaven. The understanding and conscience of the apostle, being enlightened by the Spirit of God, the law now gives him a clear view of his own heart as most vile, a fountain and sink of moral deformity.

Doubtless all will readily conclude, that some sinners are verily guilty, or exceeding criminal. All will grant, that drunkenness, profanity, robbery, murder, and other similar, gross transgressions, are base and enormous crimes. But, let us bear in mind, that the apostle, in the words of the text and context, has a particular reference to the exercises of the mind and affections of the heart. Hence, this discourse is designed to be applied to all classes of mankind; to the moralist as well as the immoral—to those who are ignorant of the awful pollution of their hearts, as well as to those who inwardly exclaim, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

1st. *And that sin, even in all men, is exceeding sinful, may appear from the consideration of its being committed against an infinite God.*

Every transgression of the divine law, whether in thought, word, or deed, is an offence against the infinitely great and glorious Majesty of heaven and earth. The most holy and blessed Jehovah, whom all heaven love and adore, is the being, against whom every sin is perpetrated. It is the Alpha and the Omega, who is absolutely perfect and in-

finitely amiable; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who is treated with disrespect and contempt by rebellious man. And how dishonourable and affronting! How vile, for finite worms of the dust to rise in rebellion against their Maker, who is over all, God blessed for ever! They sin against a Being of infinite majesty and infinite amiableness. But a being so great in dignity, and so glorious in moral excellence, is worthy of reverential fear, of supreme love, and universal obedience.

How exceeding sinful, then, for finite intelligencies to refuse to love and serve a Being of such glory and worthiness! How exceeding criminal for man to be in heart opposed to the God that made him! To see no beauty in the infinite amiableness of the divine character, is blindness of an inexcusable nature. The spirits of all the angelick hosts are enkindled with rapturous and never ceasing praises in view of the glory of him, who is the greatest and best of Beings. But shall all the principalities and powers in heaven continually adore and serve the ever living and ever blessed God; and shall man escape with impunity, for not loving him with all his heart, and promoting his glory? Can he be free from blame for being disaffected to the divine character? Because the Lord is so great and good; or because he is infinitely adorable and amiable, is it no crime to be opposed to him, to condemn his authority, and be displeased with his ways? Surely the more dignity and worthiness any being possesses, the more he ought to be revered and loved. Hence, mankind are under indispensable obligations to be devoted to God in the temper of their hearts, and in all those ways, by which he makes himself known, to serve him in their lives.

And must not that heart be an adamant, and most vile, that can continually rebel, and live at ease in sin? Is it a small thing to love and serve self as God? To seek pleasure from any forbid-

den sources, or ways of disobedience, is to despise the commandments of the Lord, and practically say, He ought not to be loved with the whole heart, and served with all the powers of the soul. Still the apostate race of Adam wholly disregard the glory of God, and are not rejoiced in his infinite blessedness. And how ready are men to notice every disrespect towards them from one of their fellow mortals! But will the Lord take it well at their hands, and not view them as ill deserving, when they treat him with disrespect in all their ways, and cast contempt on his most reasonable requisitions? Shall the law of love, that eternal and immutable rule of right, be spurned by man, and trampled upon as unrighteous and unreasonable? Alas! how odious are all sins, even the secret sins of the heart! Surely sin must appear to be exceeding sinful, from the consideration, that it is committed against an infinite God, a Being of infinite dignity, and infinite amiableness.

2dly. *Sin, even internal sin, is against the very Being of a God.*

The nature of rebellion in any kingdom, is not only against the power and authority of its government, but also against its very existence. In accordance with such a sentiment, the apostle Paul declares, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." By the expression, carnal mind, doubtless he means the heart of every unrenewed sinner. And enmity signifies something more than mere dislike. It carries the idea of ill will against some person, or being. And the enmity or ill will of unregenerate men, is asserted to be against the *supreme Being*.

The psalmist David, corroborates the same truth, when he says, "The fool hath said in his heart, no God." The sacred scriptures denominate those fools, who have not turned from the walking in the broad road to death, to walk in newness of life. And the phrase, "Hath said in his heart, no God,"

shows, that there is a secret aversion in men to his very existence.

The vilest sinner upon earth may imagine he loves God, because he is nourished and brought up by a kind and bounteous providence. But who cannot see, that this is only loving his benefits? The very reflections of impenitent sinners might lead them to see, that they are in the temper of their hearts against the existence, or being of a God. When they consider, that the Lord is determined to punish the finally impenitent with everlasting destruction; the secret feelings of every heart are, Let him give up his declaration, disregard justice, and the honour of his law and government, rather than deal with me according to my deserts. Yea! rather let there be no God; let him cease to be; unless he finally save me, though in my sins. The secret language of every impenitent sinner is, Let the Lord save me, or I would rejoice in his non-existence. Let there be no being so powerful, and so strict in justice, as to mark all my iniquities, to bring me to judgement, and punish me according to my deserts.

If mankind would examine the secret workings of their own hearts, they might know from their own observation and experience, the truth of those scriptural expressions, which set forth a heart unrenewed by grace to be against the very being, or existence of a God. And these secret feelings, or exercises of the mind, are of a murderous nature, pointing at the throne of the great Eternal.

Thus the same kind of spirit of ill will and murder, which is acted out by man against his fellow man, is in the hearts of all impenitent sinners, against the God that made them, and who constantly upholds them in being. And is it a small thing to have exercises of heart so desperately wicked? Shall not God search this out? Does he not see what is in man? All the excuses or pretences which any make to cover their sins, and hide their iniquities,

are as slender as the spider's web, and of no more avail than a covering of fig leaves. How odious and how abominable a thing is sin! It must indeed be exceeding sinful; for in its very nature it is against the very existence, or being, of the infinitely holy and blessed God.

3dly. *Sin, even every sin, is against all the perfections of God.*

Not only the perfectly good and righteous law of God, is violated by all mankind, but many sin under a dispensation of grace. Such are not only guilty of ingratitude and unthankfulness for the manifold gifts of nature, and bounties of providence; but they make light of the invaluable blessings of the gospel. The inhabitants of earth do not only break the law of heaven, and sin against God as the supreme moral Governor of the universe; but all the perfections of God are set at nought by them, and insultingly mocked.

Omnipotence may be considered as saying to every finite intelligent: Soul, stand in awe, and dare not sin against the Almighty. But the sinner practically declares, Not so, for I fear not dread Omnipotence.

The infinite understanding of the Lord thus expostulates with created intelligencies: Take heed to your ways; for the Most High has a perfect knowledge of all your doings. But they that venture to rebel, practically assert, we regard not his omniscient, all-seeing eye.

Infinite wisdom calls upon the sons of men, and cries, Hearken unto me, and your souls shall live. —But they that continue impenitent, reply, We had rather direct our own ways, and seek happiness for our own selves.

Justice, with stern commands, fulminates aloud, O sinner, take heed to my sharp rebukes. No, reply the rebellious, we will not be restrained for your divine indignation, and fiery wrath.

Grace, with a charming theme, exclaims, I, indeed,

may move to engage the heart. Ah! says impenitence, I have learnt to go on in sin ; because, that grace abounds.

Smiling mercy, descending with persuasive invitations and gentle entreaties, cries, Poor sinner ; I must win your heart. I plead a Saviour's love ; and present you his melting accents on the cross. No, no, replies the heart of adamant, I cannot be moved, even by the dying groans and agonies of the Son of God. Well, then, may inspiration declare, " Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil, and that continually."

Alas ! what an accursed thing is to be found in every heart of our apostate race ! What an odious, revolting, many headed monster is sin ! What a direful and deadly thing to be against all the perfections of God !

4thly. *That sin is exceeding sinful, may appear from the consideration of its inherent, detestable, malignant nature.*

Every sin has a turpitude diametrically opposed to moral fitness ; and the sacred scriptures consider it as a deadly leprosy of the soul. Its pollution is of a nature so black, that every transgression is a practical and blasphemous declaration, that it is more important and suitable to love and serve self, than to love and serve the most holy and blessed God. And sin has an entire tendency to introduce universal discord, and everlasting confusion and misery, throughout the universe.

The nature of sin is so direful, and exceeding sinful, that it turned angels into devils. It has deformed the moral character of man, that we may well exclaim, " The crown is fallen from our head; wo unto us, that we have sinned." Rebellion, or disaffection of heart, in any government, is, in its very nature, against its mandates, its authority, and its existence ; and, so far as it spreads, tends to its overthrow. And sin, even the most secret enmity of the heart against God, and his holy law,

is so malignant in its very nature, and infernal, that the rebel would rejoice to see heaven in confusion, unless self should be gratified. We may easily guess what an overthrow Satan would make had he power on his side. No doubt, he has envy and malice enough, to make heaven, though perfectly holy, as miserable as hell.

But have the posterity of Adam such seeds of desperate wickedness secretly lurking in their breasts ? God's holy word represents them to be the servants of Satan ; because they yield themselves to obey him. And the Saviour once declared to some, who thought much of themselves, "Ye are of your father, the devil." Some, who appeared well in their own view, and in the eyes of their fellow men, he compared to a generation of vipers. Others, who were free from gross, out-breaking sins, and who gloried in the fancied goodness of their hearts, he likened to whitened sepulchres, filled with dissolving carcasses. Let us beware, then, lest we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Surely if we think soberly, and according to the word of divine truth, sin will appear exceeding sinful ; for we shall see it to be detestable, and awfully malignant in its very nature.

5thly. *Sin will appear to be exceeding sinful, if we consider the dreadful effects which it has already produced.*

It appeared so odious and dreadfully malignant, when angels rebelled, that they were cast out of their first estate, and thrust down to hell. They are already in perdition, reserved under chains in darkness unto the judgement of the great day, when they expect fiercer torments.

Sin drove Adam out of paradise, and brought a curse upon the ground, for man's sake. All the miseries of this life are the awful effects of sin. Wars, pestilence, and famine, would never have entered this world, had not man sinned. Indi-

vidual disagreements, the contentions of societies, and national disputes, do all originate from the deadly monster, *sin*.

Sin has occasioned lamentable blindness of mind in the great concerns of religion, ignorance of the true God, remorse of conscience, and all those evils, both bodily and mental, which exist in the world. What awful havock have disease and death made amongst the human race, to teach them that sin is exceeding sinful! And what but a selfish heart of sin has given existence to falsehood and theft, profanity and robbery, and even murder itself!

Sin was so odious and outrageous, at beholding the godly lives of the ancient servants of the Holy One of Israel, that it persecuted and destroyed God's holy prophets. And now see sin, if you can witness the sight, climbing towards the heavens. For what? To nail the Son of God to the cross. Was sin satisfied with this? No: a spear must be thrust into the Saviour's side. We need not wonder, then, that the apostles were put to a cruel death by this ghastly destroyer; for they only shared the fate of their Lord and Master.

In the days of the reformation, this savage disposition, this hellish fiend, must torture with racks, burn at the stake, and mangle to death thousands of the faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus. Well then may inspiration declare, "The whole world lieth in wickedness; and the heart is desperately wicked." Moreover, how many souls are now with the rich man, lifting up their eyes in torment, and reaping the proper wages of sin. Certainly, to a serious and reflecting mind, these wide spread, sad consequences, cannot be deemed trivial things. But how exceeding sinful must sin be, to produce effects so awfully dreadful.

6thly. *That sin is exceeding sinful, may appear from the views and humble confession of saints.*

Surely they who have been taught by the Spirit of God, in his awakening, convicting, converting,

and sanctifying influences on their understandings, consciences, and hearts, must have correct sentiments of their own moral pollution, and of the nature of sin in general. And the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, do all agree in acknowledging the vileness, the exceeding great sinfulness of their hearts. I am vile, I loathe and abhor myself, is their united confession.

Not only those saints who had been openly vicious, but some who had been free from any gross immorality, have seen the wickedness of their hearts to be very great. Under the conviction and realizing sense of sin, they have seen their hearts to be so dreadfully malignant as to rise again the blessedness and existence of the infinite Jehovah. Some, who have been in a despairing state of mind, have had the hidden wickedness of their hearts drawn out to such a degree of envy and ill will against all holy beings, as to enkindle woful anguish in their souls. Their feelings were a malignant wish, that no happiness should be in the universe, unless God would certainly save them. And their own experience has taught them, that they had the very temper of fiends in their breasts. These things have been confess by believers, whose lives have been free from any openly vicious course. And doubtless if their neighbours, who may glory on account of their morality, had their sins set in order before their eyes, they would be astonished to see what vile, malignant hearts they have. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." And when any are convicted of the vileness of their own hearts as exceeding sinful and malignant, they may view as in a glass the hearts of all men. The united and humble confessions of saints do accord with the sentiment of the text, "That sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful."

7thly. The same truth does also appear from what Christ endured to lay a ground of pardon for sinners.

What was it brought the Son of God from his native heaven to this accursed world, to become incarnate and die? Was it not because the sin of man was exceeding sinful? How bitter a thing is sin, which caused him to exclaim, when about to make an atonement by his precious blood, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Can we imagine the Lord Jesus viewed it as a light thing for him to make a sacrifice for sin by his atoning sufferings?—When he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and when the sun veiled his face in darkness; then was sin announced to the universe to be exceeding sinful. It was then declared to be a thing so odious and detestable in the sight of God, that no sinner, even though penitent, could possibly be pardoned and saved, consistently with the honour of the divine law, without the shedding of blood, which would make an atonement of infinite value.

8th. *Sin will appear to be exceeding sinful, if we consider the final doom, which will be pronounced against all the incorrigible enemies of God, at the last great day.*

How dreadful this doom will be, the Saviour has most solemnly foretold, in declaring the awful sentence, which will be denounced against the wicked, when all human beings shall be summoned before the dread tribunal of their final Judge, before the judgement seat of Christ. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And he adds, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Who can conceive how dreadful God's vengeance will be, when his patience and forbearance are at an end?—Certainly most doleful and despairing will be the second death, which is the just wages of sin; for, the wicked shall be tormented in the presence of the Lamb, and of all his holy angels, in that world of wo, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is

not quenched." Surely this will make it appear, that sin is exceeding sinful; for the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

How malignant and ill deserving sin is, will most strikingly appear, when God shall recompense wrath, and render vengeance to his enemies. The dreadful sentence, which will be pronounced against the finally impenitent, will be a righteous doom; and, as it will be a revelation of the righteous judgement of God, who will render to every man according to his works, it will manifest to an assembled universe, the just demerit of sin. God is not unrighteous, who taketh vengeance; and none of the wicked in hell will suffer the least injustice. Hence, that tremendous doom, which will assuredly be pronounced against all the finally impenitent, at the great judgement day, will be a manifestation, and an undeniable declaration, that sin is exceeding sinful.

INFERENCES.

1st. *We may conclude, that many are greatly ignorant of the moral turpitude of their hearts.*

Some, perhaps, are ready to inquire, What have I done, to render me deserving the damnation of hell? Surely I have never been guilty of crimes so enormous as many others. Although I confess, I have not lived a holy life, or loved God supremely, at any time; still the sensation of guilt seldom throbs in my breast. And what can be ascribed to me so vile and glaringly depraved, as to render me exceeding sinful? I have only a few, very few imperfections, scarcely perceptible by myself, or any one else. And I have so much confidence in the goodness of my own heart, and of the many good things I have done, that, if God should cast me into hell, where Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Paul, and many other vile wretches, whom he saves, deserve to be, I would raise eternal war against him. I would rather cease to be; yea, I

would eternally wish, with all my heart, there were no God. Yes! if the Lord has such an infinite regard for his honour and glory, as to find it in his heart to damn me for a few sins, even only for disaffection of heart towards him, and his holy law, I would heartily see him as miserable as he is now blessed.

Indeed, self-righteous sinner, you now honestly declare the temper and feelings, which have secretly lurked in your breast, all your days. You now speak the very language of the infernal regions. You appear to have the very temper and spirit of a fiend. In fine, you very candidly grant, that you have the very seeds of hell deeply rooted in your heart. And yet you look upon yourself to be so innocent and worthy, that you fancy the ever blessed God, and every other intelligent being, ought to love and almost adore you. But God and Christ look upon you, and call you at heart their enemy. How solemn and alarming then to be a sinner, and, notwithstanding, how insensible are many of the vileness and depravity of their hearts.

2dly. *Mankind have nothing to fear so much as themselves.*

Some would consider it an evil almost infinitely dreadful, if they, like Job, should be stript of all their earthly goods. But what is this, compared to the evil of being daily destitute of all moral excellency. Some have a servile fear of God; but he would be their friend, had they not an heart of enmity against him. Some do greatly fear temporal disease and death; but how much greater the evils of an inward, deadly leprosy, and the second death. What would it be to have the body destroyed by ravenous wolves, or hungry lions, in comparison to the destruction of the soul, worried and devoured by malicious devils? What are temporal evils, or worldly calamities, compared with those malignant evils, which are eternal? Surely men have the greatest reason to stand in fear of themselves, lest they prove their own destroyers.

3dly. *How astonishing the patience and forbearance of God towards a guilty rebellious world!*

The Lord is not ignorant of the abominations of human beings; for, every moment of their lives, he discovers the malignant nature of their sins, and of all their most detestable and aggravated transgressions. And though many pollutions and enormities may be shrouded in midnight darkness; yet they are all naked and open to the eyes of him, with whom we have to do. The only reason why mankind are not always cut off in the very act of shocking impiety, and other polluting, presumptuous sins, must be ascribed to the patience and forbearance of God; for he looks continually upon every sin as that abominable thing, which his soul hateth; and, upon the sinner as deserving his wrath.

Nothing but the mere good pleasure of God holds any sinner upon earth out of hell, every moment of his life. All men are so exceeding sinful, that they are prepared as a brand for the burning; and nothing but mere sovereign grace and astonishing mercy prevents the brittle thread of life from being cut, to let them fall into the pit of destruction. The Lord does most seriously declare, "That he is angry with the wicked every day." He cannot love those with complacent affection, who continue in the service of sin and Satan. He feels the affront and contempt of sinners, who continually make light of his mandates, and trample on his authority. He is really displeased, and with many greatly provoked to wrath; for he well knows how fully ripened they are in sin, and deserving of perdition. How great then, how wonderfully astonishing, the patience and forbearance of God towards an exceeding sinful and rebellious world!

4thly. *If sin is so exceeding sinful as we have heard; then how absolutely necessary was it, that our Redeemer should be God.*

A mere finite, or created intelligent being, how exalted soever his capacities, could not possibly

have made an ample atonement for a world of sinners, deserving everlasting punishment. But Christ is said to have endured infinite wrath. Now we are capable of discerning, that his atoning sufferings could not have infinite efficacy to maintain the honour of the divine law, were he not God as well as man. Although the man, Christ Jesus, may be greater in dignity and moral excellence than any of the angelick hosts, still were he not personally united by a mysterious union to the true God, his sufferings and death would not have answered the demands of the law, for sinners so exceeding sinful as man. His human nature, which was holy, harmless, and undefiled, was the gift; and his divine nature, the altar, which sanctified the gift. Hence God is said to redeem the church with his own blood. And in view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, let us readily grant, it was absolutely necessary, that our Redeemer should be God.

5thly. *This subject is calculated strikingly to enforce on our minds the solemn truth and declaration of the Saviour, " Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

A sinful, malignant heart, is indeed wholly unprepared for the holy communion and joys of saints and angels. And it would be as unbecoming the Most High to raise a fiend from the bottomless pit to the world above, as it would to admit one of the race of Adam into that glorious company, that blessed society, with an unsanctified, impenitent heart. What fellowship hath light with darkness? or sin with holiness? Even if the Lord himself should not shut out the finally impenitent from his holy habitation; their sinful, malignant hearts, would exclude them from heaven's holy songs of humility and grace. The natural man has no heart, no pure desire, no holy longings, for the employments and enjoyments of the full glories of God in the spotless, bright realms of endless day. Then, my dear hearers and readers, ever bear well in your minds,

that, if sin is so exceeding sinful and malignant, as the word of God decides, how strikingly solemn, and momentously true, this declaration of the divine Redeemer, “ Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

If an impenitent sinner were permitted to enter the abodes of the blessed, what would describe the contrast of the dissimilarity of character! Surely there could be no assimilation to him amongst the inhabitants of that holy place, unless every angel would become a devil—every saint, a fiend; and God himself infinitely sinful and selfish. And, should such an awful revolution be effected, heaven itself would be an infinitely dreadful hell.

Suppose that one from the bottomless pit should overcome omnipotence—should transcend the impassable gulf—should scale the battlements of Heaven—and then seat himself on the throne of the great Eternal. Would this make him happy? No! let him go where he would, he would be a devil—a perfectly sinful, selfish, and miserable being. He would feel himself a malignant, hateful, burning, intolerable wretch.

If a man should die in his sins, and be received into the glory of the third heaven, what satisfaction could he take in employments whose very nature is diametrically opposed to his inmost soul, and to all his unhallowed desires. What complacency could he experience from that innumerable company of holy beings, every one of whom would detest him with the most perfect hatred, and who would shun him with horrour, as they would the malignity and wo of the bottomless pit. Then the heart of man must be renewed—he must be changed—must repent and turn from his sins—must be rendered holy as God is holy, or it will be for ever impossible for him to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

SERMON XXV.

CHRISTIAN FAITHFULNESS.

NUMBERS XIV. 24.

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it.

Moses, the appointed legislator, instructer, and leader of the children of Israel, was their victorious deliver from the house of bondage in the land of Egypt; and destined to be their successful guide to the land of promise. The Israelites had, by several stages, arrived at the southern border of Canaan, when he was commanded of the Lord to send men, to search the land, one from every tribe of their fathers.

After the twelve were chosen, "Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain, and see the land what it is, and the people that dwell therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein or not: and be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

"So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak were. And they

came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff: and they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs. The place was called the brook Eschol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

“And they went, and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey: and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched.

“Then said the Lord, Because those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers: neither shall any of them that provoked me see it;—but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.”

As in the present instance, so throughout the world, many are governed by a selfish spirit, or by the spirit of him who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience. But some are in-

fluenced by another spirit, a benevolent spirit, or the spirit of God. Caleb had a spirit of faith, and holiness, and obedience; and the Lord granted, that he followed him fully. That is, *He had faithfully discharged the service, to which he had been called, and was ready for any undertaking, to which the Lord should appoint him, however perilous or self-denying.* He believed his word, observed his directions, and depended on his faithfulness, power, and goodness, that matters would eventually take place, just as they were foretold, notwithstanding difficulties or improbabilities. This he did with perseverance and courage, though influence and example, terrors and sufferings, combined to divert him from his course. He at first met with hatred, reproaches, and dangers; but he survived his enemies and their opposition, and eventually obtained honour from both God and man.

On this occasion Caleb perhaps took the more active part; and as Joshua was designed to be the successor of Moses, Caleb is the more frequently mentioned, though Joshua was evidently included.

To assist those, who would wish to imitate the example of Caleb, and obtain like blessings, temporal and eternal, I purpose to show what is implied, in following the Lord fully; then offer some considerations to excite to faithfulness.

1st. *Would any follow the Lord fully, they must regard all his commands.*

The divine requisitions are so interwoven with each other, and so completely harmonious, that he who breaketh one, is considered as a violator of the others. Hence it is written, "He who offends in one point, is guilty of all." This may be easily illustrated by two examples. Suppose a person appears to be remarkably pious; but that he is found guilty of a constant series of theft. Such an one would be called a hypocrite. Rottenness of heart must be at the bottom of all his performances.

Again: suppose a man complies with all the divine mandates, as they respect his fellow men; but neglects those which relate to God. That man is destitute of true religion. Let any one attend to all religious observances, if he neglect the duty of forgiveness towards his fellow men, or that of prayer to God, he is as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. The reason is obvious; for a spirit of true obedience aims at an observance of all those duties which have reference either to God or man. Where grace is implanted in the heart, it inspires the soul with the noble principle conscientiously to comply with every known duty.

Some persons attend to certain forms of religion, which are convenient; and they habitually neglect others, or live in the practice of some known sin; because they are only children of disobedience. The nature of true obedience is not partial, is not selfish, is not guided by worldly interest as a motive to direct the conduct. The law of God, and not *self*, must be the spring of action. Let every soul of us remember, that we must have respect to all the divine commands, would we attain the character of christian faithfulness.

2dly. *To follow the Lord fully, he must be followed at all times.*

God is ever worthy of the same love; and his commands are suited to every age, and to all the circumstances of life. Still there are some, who, at certain times and seasons, zealously engage in the externals of religion, and appear to have their minds seriously impressed; but shortly all their religion, external and internal, vanishes, as the early cloud and morning dew. Now, such are only way side, or stony ground hearers. In times of general awakenings, we may see some, who are all engagedness in religious exercises; but, as soon as the revival is past, their religion apparently is gone. Such persons, however, either never served the Lord fully, like Caleb; or else like Peter, in a time

of trial, they now follow him afar off. Thus some become the votaries of religion, when she is fashionable, who, when Zion mourns, forsake her ways. Hence, a time of persecution is well calculated to prove the genuineness of a man's experience.

When Caleb beheld others falling from their standing, he yielded not to temptation, nor neglected his duty in time of declension. Both he and Joshua, with great intrepidity, and in the most entergetic language, contradicted the evil report of the other spies. "They spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, the land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us, a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land."

The others could not deny that the land was rich and fruitful; but they insinuated, that this was of no consequence, as the inhabitants were exceedingly powerful. The service, in which the spies were employed, required great courage; for they could expect no favour from the Canaanites, in case they were detected and apprehended, and they must therefore go forth at the hazard of their lives. Their unbelief was their sin; for they had witnessed the mighty works of the Lord in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and even to that day in the wilderness. Had the Canaanites been a thousand times stronger than Israel, they could not be stronger than Israel's God.

Caleb and Joshua put their trust in the Lord, and possessed that spirit of obedience which the others did not. Their example and report were calculated to encourage the people to go forward. Thus to professors of religion a time of trial is as the wind, which separates the chaff from the wheat, or as the fire, which, while it tries and purifies the

gold, severs the dross. Then they, who would imitate the example of Caleb, must bear in mind, that they are to follow the Lord at all times.

3dly. *To follow the Lord fully, he must be followed in all places.*

God is every where present, beholding the evil and the good. He notices our ways in private life, on publick occasions, and whilst in his sanctuary : and whether we be in the house of God, in our retired walk, or intermingled with the multitude, the Lord is to be served. There are some, however, who appear with decency and solemnity in a religious assembly ; but when they attend a social festivity, or some publick anniversary, they seem to forget that God is there. How vain and foolish their conversation, how trifling their manners, wholly incompatible with the accountability of an intelligent and immortal being. They act, as if they believed the service of God should be confined to his house ; and that when absent, they might serve whom they please. Some are serious, when in the presence of those who are serious ; but when in the company of the profane, they are profane. This, however, was not the case with Caleb. Evil communications did not corrupt his good manners. That spirit, which was with him, would not yield to sin.

4thly. *To follow the Lord fully, he must be followed unreservedly.*

The Lord demands the obedience of the heart, and that all the ways of man be in conformity to his will. Either a treasure in heaven may have the chief place in our affections, or the world may have dominion over them ; but both cannot have the ascendancy. The language of the Saviour to all is, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." There are some, who would be honest when their worldly interest would be promoted ; they would tell the truth, when falsehood would not bring filthy lucre as their gain ; and they would attend strictly to

religious ceremonies, when an accusing conscience, or a slavish fear of punishment, powerfully agitates their minds. But to consider themselves as the servants of God unreservedly, is a thought which they cannot at any time endure. Fain would they be the servants of sin and Satan, and that most faithfully, could they persuade themselves that they should obtain happiness at last. But whilst self, or the god of this world, has the heart, the Lord cannot be served at all.

Charity, almsgiving, or prayer, will not avail, except performed with a single eye to the glory of God. "Could we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, were we possessed of all knowledge, human and divine, could we perform wonders like Moses, celebrate the praises of God like David, prophesy like Isaiah, write like Paul, or preach like Peter; had we power with God like Jacob, the valour of Joshua, the strength of Sampson, the wisdom of Solomon, or the zeal of Phinehas, with every other qualification, natural and acquired, that ever centred in any of the sons of men," we should deceive ourselves to conclude we had the character of Caleb, who followed the Lord fully, unless we have a heart to follow him unreservedly.

I now propose, in the *second place*, to offer some considerations, to excite to faithfulness in the service of God.

1st. *If believers would act honestly, they must follow the Lord fully.*

It is enjoined upon them to render to all their dues. But they are bound to love God with all their hearts, for he is supremely worthy, and to obey all his commands, for they are most reasonable. All mankind are under the same immutable, moral obligations. Moreover, believers are not their own, but they are bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ, applied by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Hence, they owe themselves to him

as faithful servants, and ought to consider their time, and the devotedness of all their talents, as his proper claim. And whatsoever he enjoins upon them to do, they should not be reluctant in doing; but should readily refrain from what he forbids.

It is conceded by the world, that they who profess the gospel of Christ, should be devoted to his service. Their very standing demands of them faithfulness. The sacred oracles teach us, that it is expected of stewards, that a man be found faithful. But believers are accounted as stewards for God, and to him they are accountable for their stewardship. Then, let them be always influenced by a principle of Christian honesty, and they will be enabled to follow the Lord fully.

2dly. *If believers do not follow the Lord fully, they break the most endearing obligations, and violate the most solemn vows.*

They have covenanted to be the Lord's, to renounce the works of darkness, and to walk according to the light of the gospel. Their obligations do not only bind them to refrain from all ungodliness, but also to lead godly lives. And by the grace of God they promise entire obedience respecting the various duties which they owe to him, and to their fellow men. They not only engage to be on the Lord's side, but they covenant to serve him fully. And in what manner do they make their sacred vows? Before the church, in the presence of God and his holy angels, and before men.

Now, is a covenant between man and man binding? and when made on a very important occasion, and in a very solemn manner, should it be carefully fulfilled? Yet how much more solemn for man to enter into covenant with his Maker! How should he shudder at the thought, of violating such momentous engagements! When believers are tempted to the commission of sin, or to omit some known duty, let a holy awe impress their minds, and excite to obedience. In view of their cove-

nant transaction, let them exclaim, “ How shall I sin against God, and commit this great wickedness in his sight.” Let not their solemn, publick profession, be in vain, and worse than in vain. Let them ever bear in mind, that they have devoted themselves to serve the Lord fully. And may a holy dread prevent them from breaking their most endearing obligations, and violating their most solemn vows.

3dly. *The comfort of believers, in the present state, is an urgent call for them to follow the Lord fully.*

“ The spies, sent of God, found an extraordinary bunch of grapes, which they cut off, with the branch on which it grew, and carried it to their brethren. This was an apt emblem of the *earnests* of heavenly joys, which believers receive on earth in the consolations of the Holy Spirit.” Probably Caleb and Joshua brought this cluster, as the others were unfaithful, and unfavourably disposed towards Canaan. We are however taught, that they who live near to God, enjoy his gracious smiles and loving kindnesses, as some of the choicest and most delicious fruits, to refresh and cheer them in their pilgrimage state ; but they who depart from him, despise the riches of the goodly land, and forsake their own mercies. Says the psalmist, “ Great peace have they, that keep thy law.” And the faithful do find, by happy experience, that peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost, are their sweetest, their richest blessings.

The enjoyments of believers, in the present state, are greatly varied. Whilst some enjoy much of the light of heaven ; others frequently grope in darkness. The former lead a life of devotedness to God, and manifest to the world, that they are seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly. The latter wander so much, by neglecting religious duties, and their conversation and conduct are so buried in the cares of the world, that their profession chiefly makes the difference between them

and the worldling. Who have much enjoyment of religion upon earth? They whose lives are marked with zeal for the honour and glory of God, and the present and eternal good of their fellow men. But the slothful christian has little comfort: for the bright rays of heaven do not enlighten his path; and the earth becomes a gloomy wilderness, as its enjoyments are embittered to his taste, or dried up, on the account of his unfaithfulness.

4thly. *Benevolence to mankind, and the glorious cause of the Redeemer, urge and call loudly upon them to follow the Lord fully.*

The Lord has been pleased to advance his kingdom in the world, through the instrumentality of human exertions. When his friends abound in all christian duties, they do greatly strengthen each other's hands, and encourage each other's hearts to every good work. Then Zion's prospects brighten of being enlarged and built up. 'Tis then her beauty and strength begin to shine forth, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. 'Tis then she rides forth conquering her enemies, and bringing them to enlist under her standard. 'Tis then she puts on her beautiful garments, and is arrayed in the majesty of her King.

But how is the scene changed, when the friends of the Redeemer are unfaithful. How gloomy, then, are the prospects of Zion. As contentions and jealousy arise, so her foes triumph. And whilst her hands are enfeebled, the hands of her enemies are strengthened. Then how does her sacred interests entreat her friends to go forth like Caleb, with their faces set as a flint in the path of duty. Let them have their lamps trimmed and burning.

Let humility, watchfulness, and prayer, beam forth and consecrate all their ways. Let their presence render sacred the places of their walk. Let them never forget, that benevolence to mankind, and the glorious, bleeding cause of the Redeemer, plead for their faithfulness.

5thly. *The thought of a triumphant dying hour, should awaken believers to be vigilant in the service of God.*

The hour of death is a most solemn and interesting period. In that trying scene, we behold some departing in the triumphs of faith, and others yielding up the ghost aghast with despair. Believers in general die as they have lived. They whose lives are distinguished for eminent piety, in their expiring moments may exultingly exclaim, "O, death, where is thy sting! O, grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory." How happy for surviving friends to see a soul thus departing in peace, with heaven in full view. Such a glorious hour more than counter-balances for all that is done or suffered, during a whole life.

The apostle Paul was a faithful servant of God, during his ministry, and his departure was triumphant. Whilst contemplating on his mortality, he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also, that love his appearing." In view of his approaching dissolution, he counted all the sufferings of his life but light afflictions. Let those who would gladly experience a similar happy dying hour, imitate the apostle's life of faithfulness.

But death is sometimes a terrour to believers, and they depart with dismay. And why? On the account of their living so much in the neglect of duty, and of being stumbling blocks to others, they have not a bright and cheering evidence of a well grounded hope. Hence their souls are full of anguish, and the hearts of their relatives and friends pained to behold them departing. For their un-faithfulness in life they are chastened in death. And though the soul be admitted into the glorious

presence of God, yet how lamentable such a departure of a professed follower of Christ. Then may the abiding reflection of a triumphant dying hour, awaken believers to vigilance, and to follow the Lord fully.

6thly. *The reward of a glorious recompence beyond the grave, even an exalted crown of glory, is a most important consideration to excite to faithfulness in the service of God.*

The sacred scriptures teach us, that future rewards and punishments will be administered in very different degrees, according as mankind shall have lived more or less godly or ungodly.—That the righteous who shall be found faithful, in turning many from their unrighteousness, shall shine in the kingdom of heaven, as the sun in the brightness of the firmament. This same truth we are also taught by the expression, that “God will render to every man according to his deeds.” The true import of this declaration is not merely, that there will be future rewards and punishments; but that the righteous, who follow the Lord fully, will reap an exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and that the notoriously wicked will endure the most dreadful woes. Reason and common sense serve to corroborate this proposition, by showing its moral fitness and reasonableness.

The parable of the talents, and of the faithful stewards, evidently discloses, that the future rewards of the righteous will be different, some greater than others. One is represented as being placed over ten cities, and the other over five, in proportion to their labours and faithfulness. And in relation to the same subject, the apostle Paul asserts, “That one star differeth from another star in glory.”

But how can this be, if all the blessed are perfectly happy? In two respects. One, on the ground of their different capacities; for if all their vessels are filled, some must drink larger draughts

of bliss than others. Moreover, the joys of some will be far more heightened and intense than those of others, in consequence of their faithfulness. The very idea of a probationary state, and of different degrees of obedience, would serve to show that there must be different degrees of reward.

As there are different orders and dignities in the angelick world, so the scriptures unfold, that some saints will be exalted to higher mansions in glory than others. By express declarations, by parables, and comparisons, they do fully establish the proposition, that they who do and suffer the most for righteousness sake in this life, will be the peculiar favourites of heaven in the blessedness of eternity. And as this animating truth is generally believed, O, that it might have its due weight to influence believers to serve the Lord fully. For the consideration of a glorious recompence of reward, even an exalted and eternal weight of glory, should be a constant, inspiring inducement to excite them to faithfulness in the service of God.

REMARKS.

1st. *How unbecoming a christian to say, that he would be satisfied merely to gain admittance into heaven!*

Such an expression is in direct opposition to the spirit and language of revealed truth. It is in hostility to common sense, and to all the excitements of mental and moral improvement. It is a sentiment originating from a slavish spirit of fear, as though the great spring of action were to escape hell. But the true christian is influenced by love, and desires heaven as his chief good, on the account of the near and full enjoyment of God, and the society of holy beings. It is indeed true, that every believer is as unworthy of the lowest degree of bliss in heaven, as his sins have rendered him deserving of hell. All the redeemed, in their songs of salvation, will forever ascribe it to the un-

bounded grace and mercy of God, through the blood of his Son, that they were delivered from endless pains. Still the same considerations, that should excite to faithfulness, to follow the Lord fully, ought to inspire us earnestly to desire a glorious recompence of reward.

Shall a child of God be content, that he is merely numbered with his family? Shall not an heir of immortal glory have his thoughts soaring in the celestial regions? Do believers act worthy of their high vocation, to see how little they may do, to gain a heavenly prize? How much more worthy, that whatsoever their hands find to do, they should do with their might, that they may shine as stars of the first magnitude in the kingdom of their God and Saviour, in eternal glory.

2dly. *This subject, by contrast, is alarming to unbelievers.*

Although Caleb and Joshua entered the promised land; yet destruction awaited the disobedient. It is written, "The men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land; Even those men, that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord."

All the impenitent are in the broad road, which leadeth to death; though some are travelling with more hasty strides than others. As some believers exhibit manifest evidence, that they are the children of God, and are laying up a treasure in heaven; so some unbelievers produce striking marks, that they are the children of the wicked one, and are treasuring up wrath to be paid in wo. Do the righteous enjoy some prelibations to support them under their trials, and cheer them in their expiring moments? The stings of conscious guilt remind the wicked of their dread, eternal inheritance; and their overwhelming agonies in death, are but a faint prelude to their future pains.

Some of the wicked are not only bent on ruin, but they do much to plunge themselves in the lowest abyss of hell. Their whole conversation and conduct manifest, that they fear not God, nor regard man. They appear emphatically to belong to the kingdom of Satan, and to be redoubling their efforts, in laying up a treasure of wrath. And the degrees of wo will be vastly different, as some of the finally impenitent will be found to have sinned under far more aggravated circumstances than others. Hence the very thought of being bold in sin, and finally hardened in iniquity, should prove a timely warning to young transgressors; and strike alarm in the breasts of all unbelievers, to flee from the wrath to come.

3dly. *Then let them repent, turn to the Lord with all their hearts, and go on to follow him fully.*

They who are now in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity, may be brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Is there a soul in this assembly, bowed down under a sense of guilt and wretchedness? Let repentance then excite the joy of angels. Let the church be made glad. Shall this be a good day, a precious season, to be remembered with joy in the annals of eternity? May not this discourse be blessed to the soul of some thoughtless, or some awakened sinner? When the durable riches of the heavenly Canaan are portrayed, do not, impenitent reader or hearear, like the faithless spies, exaggerate the difficulties of the way. Let not disobedience and an evil report exclude you from the goodly land, and draw down the vengeance of God on your own heads. Think of your dying bed. And whether would you choose to die, and have your portion in eternity with Cain, Balaam, and Pharaoh; with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; with Herod, Judas, and Pilate; or would you not rather desire an inheritance with Abel, Moses, and Aaron; with Joshua and Caleb; with Isaiah and Daniel; with John the baptist and the twelve

apostles; and other excellent ones whose names are recorded with approbation in the sacred volume? Can you hesitate one moment, which side you would take. Consider the matter well, and make your election. Choose this day whom you will serve, and choose life. Choose the afflictions of the people of God, for a season, to serve him fully; that, with all the redeemed ones from among men, you may reign with Christ eternally.

4thly. *May I not hope, that this discourse will be improved by those who have espoused the cause of the Redeemer.*

Yes, this comfort I must and will enjoy. And may it be received into their hearts as good seed sown, and spring up producing the fruits of righteousness in their lives. And remember, Christian friends, the present is the time for you to sow bountifully, that you may reap a rich and glorious harvest. The willing and the obedient shall eat of the good of the land; so whatever you would do, do quickly. Says Caleb, Let us go up at once, and possess the land. As if he thought the forty days spent in searching it, had been a long delay to those who were earnest to take possession of the country which God had given them. May the Lord bless his word, and even this discourse, to the edification of your souls.

How cheering the reflection, that believers have frequently gone off the stage of time into eternity, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, with unspeakable and triumphant joy! But how gloomy, when their sun goes down, and sets under a dark and cheerless cloud. And who would not wish to die like a *Christian*, having a hope blooming with immortal expectations?

SERMON XXVI.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE HUMAN BODY, AND WONDERFULLY GLORIOUS CHANGE.

I. CORINTHIANS XV. 53.

This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

THE grand theme of this chapter, is the general resurrection of the dead. The subject is so discussed as to exhibit one of the first specimens of that expansion and sublimity of intellect, for which St. Paul is peculiarly distinguished. Nothing in heathen antiquity can be found among poets, orators, or philosophers, which in loftiness of conception, or extensiveness of views, deserves to be named in comparison with this discourse. From its commencement, and throughout all its progress, the writer gradually ascends higher and higher in his descriptions, until he elevates the mind of his reader to the heavens.

In the beginning of the chapter, the resurrection of the body is asserted and proved. The proof alleged, is the resurrection of Christ. The argument may be advantageously exhibited in the following manner: Christ predicted his own resurrection, and actually rose in the manner predicted. He has thus proved both his power to do every thing, and his veracity in all his declarations. But he has declared that he will raise up, at the last day, all that are in their graves. Thus his own resurrection is a complete proof of the general resurrection of mankind.

The apostle pursues the examination of the subject, by putting an objection against a future state into the mouth of an opponent, derived from apprehended difficulties concerning the future existence

of the body. The objection is indeed without weight; as it is merely an expression of the objector's ignorance concerning the subject, and his inability to imagine what kind of body, or by what means any body can be united to the soul, in the future world.

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" The source of perplexity with regard to the question, appears to be, whether the same body will be raised.—If the query be, whether the same atoms which have composed our bodies in the present world, will constitute the body raised at the final day, both reason and revelation evince the contrary. The whole number of particles, which have at different times constituted the body of a man during his progress through life, will undoubtedly be sufficient to constitute many such bodies. The answer to the objector in relation to this question, is the following: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat or some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. So also is the resurrection of the dead."

Thus we are taught, that even the ordinary productions of the earth, exhibit a process which might illustrate the subject; for the seed sown in the ground does not vegetate, except it corrupt and die. This is true; for whatever change transfers a body into a new class of beings, may be justly called the death of the original substance. And in fact, the seed, as such, dieth; for it ceases to remain an original grain of corn or of wheat; though a part of it springs, as it were, into new life, by a process which we can no more fully conceive, than we can the manner of the resurrection. Thus, the bodies of believers, after corrupting and turning into dust, will be raised into a new and more glorious form; not in every respect the same that they were, but far superiour and more excellent. Still, the identity of

the same particles of matter, as necessary to the resurrection of the same body, is no where mentioned in the sacred volume. The instruction contained in the present chapter, seems to militate against such an opinion. The Lord hath many other ways of preserving personal identity. Besides, exactly the same particles do not constitute our bodies, for two hours together, in any part of our lives; yet we are the same persons, both in body and soul, from childhood till old age.

Again: If the same constitution, arrangement, and qualities of the body, be intended by the question, it is equally evident that the same body will not be raised. This is decisively taught in the following declaration: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Thus the human body, in its present form of subsistence, and with its present animal wants, propensities, and infirmities, cannot partake of the pure and refined enjoyments of the kingdom of glory. Nor can the body, as mortal and corruptible, inherit the incorruptible and unchangeable felicity of heaven. Reason would decide to a certainty, that a constitution which involves in its nature, decay and termination, cannot belong to a body destined for the residence of an immortal and ever vigorous mind.

The apostle, to illustrate the present subject, refers to the variety and the wonderful nature of the works of God, in the flesh of different animals as well as the form of vegetables, differently constituted, produced, and supported. Yet we cannot comprehend the manner in which the Lord hath made, and preserves this difference; though it is evidently intended to fit them for their several kinds of life, their diverse elements, and various destinations. Cannot he then raise our bodies suited to the state intended for them, consistently with our personal identity, though in a manner inexplicable to us? The great diversity of animal natures should serve

to teach us, that there will be, in various respects, a vast difference in the human body, in the resurrection.

We are also taught that the same wisdom and power of God hath formed celestial, as well as terrestrial, bodies; but the celestial appear far more splendid than the terrestrial. Yet even among the former, there are different degrees of glory, as they are in themselves, and as they appear to us. The sun is far more glorious than the moon; yet the reflected light of the moon far exceeds that of the remote stars; and even some of them shine more brightly than others. Thus also will it be in the resurrection of the dead. The bodies of the righteous will appear as much more glorious than they now do, as the glory of the heavenly luminaries excels that of an opaque clod of the earth; yet they will shine with different degrees of splendour, as do the sun, moon, and stars.

After this illustration, the apostle dwells extensively on the nature of the body with which those who are dead, will be invested at the final day. He also declares the change which those who are living at that time, will experience, and concludes with a song of triumph over death and the grave.

Now it may be remarked, against the resurrection itself, there is no presumption; and in favour of it, a presumptive argument may be derived from analogy. Many things pertaining to this world, naturally and strongly dispose the mind to admit the doctrine. In this climate, almost the whole vegetable world dies annually under the chilling influence of winter. At the return of spring, the face of nature is renewed; and all the plants, shrubs, and trees, with which it was adorned, are again clothed with verdure, life, and beauty. From the appearance of winter, when nature is clad with the habiliments of death, who could expect that she would ever revive and live again, unless taught to believe it from what has so often taken place?

"In the insect creation, we find a direct and striking example of the manner of the resurrection itself. Many of the animals of this class begin their existence in the form of worms. After continuing some time in the humble state of being to which they are necessarily confined by their structure, they die and are gone. In the moment of death, they construct for themselves a species of shell, in which they may, with the strictest propriety, be said to be entombed. Here they are dissolved into a mass of semi-transparent water; the whole, which remains of the previously existing animal, exhibiting to the eye no trace of life, and no promise of a future revival. After remaining in a dead or torpid state, until the term of its burial approaches to its proper period, the tomb discloses and a winged animal comes forth with a nobler form, often exquisitely beautiful; brilliant with the gayest splendour, possessed of new and superior powers, and destined to a more refined and more exalted life. Its food is now the honey of flowers; its field of being, the atmosphere. Here it expatiates at large in the delightful exercise of its newly discovered faculties, and in the high enjoyment of those sun-beams which were the immediate means of its newly acquired existence."

In those transmutations which pass under our immediate review of the insect tribes, we never see them form one state to resume the same appearance in another; but, in each gradation in their progress, they acquire augmented powers, and are invested with new and more beautiful forms. It cannot, therefore, be unreasonable to expect a vast augmentation in the active powers of our nature, both corporeal and mental. And the same analogies incline us to expect the addition, or development, of many new faculties, of which, in the present state, the imperfection of our reason cannot form any conception.

Now let us bear in mind, that in the various changes of existence, of forms and faculties, the in-

sect is considered the same, though it has assumed to itself life and death, and even different natures. Hence we may discern, in the essentially different state of existence, by reason of a wonderful change and transformation, a type of the resurrection of the human body. Through life, the human frame is constantly changing; and at the sound of the last trump will experience a most amazing change, though identity will be one of its attributes. The seed that is cast into the earth, after being sown or planted, apparently is dead; yet it springs up, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. The acorn that falls to the ground, corrupts, vegetates, and becomes a mighty oak. The examples which have been noticed, bear a great analogy to the death, burial, and resurrection of the human body. Still it should be remarked, in a certain respect there is a difference. They are all effected by the power of God, according to his established laws of nature; but the resurrection will be the effect of his divine power exerted beyond any such law, or stated course of operation. Let these observations suffice as illustrations of the present subject, derived from the system of nature, exhibited to our view in the present state of things.

Let us attend to the instruction of the divine word, more particularly in regard to the present subject.

Job thus expresses himself with the fullest assurance of its truth. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me." As to Job himself, though his body would be consumed by putrefaction, yet he should be raised from the dead, and behold his God and Saviour. Him he should certainly behold for himself, not only as the object of mental con-

temptation, but with his own eyes in his own body raised from the dead, and not in another.

St. John does most strikingly describe the resurrection and future state. He informs us that the time was approaching, when all the innumerable multitude of the dead would hear the voice of the Son of God, calling them to arise and come to judgment. So that wheresoever their bodies were dispersed and turned to dust, they would be immediately raised up and come forth, either to life or to damnation, according as their works had been. Hear his emphatical declaration: "Marvel not; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

The apostle Paul, when standing before Felix, the governour of Judea, fully avows the doctrine under consideration. He says, "This I confess unto thee; so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." The Apostle was free to confess, that he worshipped the God of his fathers; that he believed the doctrines and promises both of the law and the prophets, concerning the Messiah; and that he expected a future resurrection of both the just and the unjust, as the Jews in general allowed.

Let us now notice the argumentative manner of the apostle in his address to the Corinthians. A small portion of his arguments exhibits various considerations as undeniable proof of the doctrine of the general resurrection of the dead.

"Now if Christ be preached, that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And

if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised! And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."

This chain of the apostle's argument is highly interesting and most conclusive. Having established the fact of Christ's resurrection, from that fact he shows the certainty of our resurrection.

And let me remark, that identity itself makes it necessary that our mortal bodies should be raised. If the same bodies should not be raised, there would in reality be no resurrection; but a new creation of bodies. Besides, it appears fit and suitable, that those bodies which were the instruments of righteousness or unrighteousness should be raised and made the partners of the soul in happiness or misery. And though the bodies which will be raised, will not differ from what they now are in regard to their substance, yet they will differ exceedingly in respect to their qualities and attributes. The bodies of the righteous and wicked will have a momentous difference in one point of view; for of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, they shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Then whatever strength and immortality shall be put upon the bodies of the wicked, they will only serve to make them instru-

ments of endless pains. But St. Paul, in the words of the text and context, is describing particularly the glorious change that shall take place in the bodies of the saints, when they shall be raised. And now this part of the subject demands our attention.

The first thing to be noticed, is, that the body will be raised incorruptible. “ It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.”

“ The body, as a descendant of dying Adam, during its mortal state, and as laid in the grave, is sown in corruption: it tends to corruption; and after death, it is speedily wasted and decayed. But at the resurrection, it will be raised in incorruption, without any seeds of mortality, disease, or decay, in its constitution. One of the most striking characterists of the human body in its present state, is its universal tendency to decay. This tendency appears, and often fatally, in its earliest existence, and at every succeeding stage of its progress. It is, however, most visible and affecting, after it has passed the middle point of life. Then decay arrests it in many forms, and with irresistible power. Then the limbs gradually stiffen, the faculties lose their vigour, the strength declines, the face becomes overspread with wrinkles, and the head with the locks of age. Health, at the same time, recedes by degrees, even from the firmest constitution. Pains multiply, feebleness and languor lay hold on the whole system; and death at length seizes the frame as his prey, and changes it to corruption and dust. As it is appointed unto man once to die, so from the cradle to the tomb, he is constantly liable and tending to his dissolution.”

But a mighty and glorious difference will be made in our nature, when the body revives beyond the grave. All the evils and accidents which befal it in the present world, will then have lost their power. Hunger, thirst, weakness, declension, death, and corruption, are bounded by the tomb. The grave is their everlasting termination. They that rise to the

resurrection of life, will hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. Firm, enduring, unassailable by distress, and proof against the undermining progress of years, they will, like gold tried in the fire, remain bright and indestructible, through the endless succession of ages.

The bodies of our first parents, before their apostacy, were not liable to disease and death. Had they not sinned, they would never have seen corruption. Their food, the air, the tree of life, and all things around them, would then have tended only to preserve their animal frames from destruction. Still their bodies would have been flesh and blood for ever; unless at some period of their existence, they should have experienced a wonderful change. But the human body, in the resurrection, will be far more refined in its substance, and possess attributes far superiour to what it did even in paradise. Moreover, the region of its everlasting destination is inconceivably better adapted to prevent decay and corruption, and to promote vigour and incorruption, than were the salubrious gales that fanned the garden of Eden. Both the nature and condition of a glorified body, become its eternal safeguards from the diseases and infirmities to which our mortal frames are constantly subject. Thus its very attributes and situation will for ever render it far removed from dissolution; and will serve to perpetuate, for eternal ages, its highly exalted nature of a glorious incorruption.

2dly. *The body will be raised immortal.* "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

The terms incorruptible and immortal, in various respects, might be illustrated as synonymous expressions. But, although their import in general is the same, still there is a sense in which there is a difference. An incorruptible body, although it cannot perish by decay and dissolution, may, notwithstanding-

standing, be annihilated. An immortal body will know no end, either from its own weakness or from external power. Such has God been pleased to constitute the bodies of his children beyond the grave. Death to them shall be no more. In defiance of time, and superiour to injury, the body will live with him for ever and ever.

Hence, though incorruption and immortality are attributes so nearly allied as not easily to be separated in their illustrations, still they may be considered only as kindred attributes, and not both entirely the same. As both the declaration of Heaven, and the circumstances of the human frame, in the present state, evince the mortality of the body, so both the will of God and the attributes of a glorified body, will secure its immortality. The soul is not only destined in its nature, and by divine appointment, to immortality; but in the resurrection the body will become immortal as the soul. And as in the present state the body is inevitably corruptible and mortal, so in the future state it will be raised to put on incorruption and immortality.

3dly. *The body, at the resurrection, will be arrayed in glory.* “It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.”

To have these animated, useful bodily frames, become lifeless and turn to corruption, is an affecting consideration. How humiliating the thought, that these mechanically organized temples of our spirits, should be changed into a loathsome, disarranged mass, to be reduced to atoms by the devouring worm! How is the pride of man laid low, and his glory departed, when the king of terrors consigns his body to the grave!

But the resurrection announces a release to the degraded captive from the power of the grim tyrant, and exclaims, O grave! where is thy victory? And now let us notice how glorious must be the triumph to the dishonoured prisoner. But for this we must have some just conception of the greatness of the

change in being restored to liberty, and raised to a state of exaltation. Says the apostle to his brethren, the Philippians, in view of this subject, " We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the power whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." How mysterious and wonderful the change, when the body of our humiliation will be fashioned anew ; that it may become of the like form with the glorified body of the Lord Jesus !

On the mount of transfiguration, Christ appeared to Peter, James, and John, in his glorious body ; and then, as the Evangelists inform us, His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white and glistering. In Revelation we have a more ample exhibition of the same illustrious object ; in some respects emblematical, but in all sublime and glorious beyond a parallel. " And being turned, I John, saw seven golden candlesticks ; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow ; and his eyes were as a flame of fire ; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand, seven stars ; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Of the supreme splendour of this appearance, how high must our conceptions rise, when we hear St. John subjoin, And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead ! In the wonderful change at the resurrection, St. Paul observes, there shall be a display of energy ; that is, of power and skill, like that by which Christ subdues all things unto himself. What a transformation must that be which these poor, frail, perishable bodies will experience when the full import of this prediction shall be accomplished !

How exceedingly is such a change to be desired by beings like ourselves; subject as we are to pain and disease, decay and death!

By reason of sin, and the consequent curse denounced upon man during life, at death, and in the grave, the body is sown in dishonour. Its mortal existence somewhat resembles the state of a condemned criminal. Various sufferings and diseases are the forerunners of the execution, which takes place at death, with much ignominy. And the putrid, wasting state of a dead body, is very dishonourable in itself; though the death and burial of Christ have consecrated the grave to all believers, and his resurrection hath assured us that the body shall be raised in glory. But how honourable will be the triumph over death and the grave, when the body will be rendered most beautiful and glorious, resembling the glorious body of the Lord Jesus himself, who is the first-born from the dead!

In addition to the body itself being raised in glory, the divine glories with which it will be constantly presented, will serve to render its appearance still more glorious. This was the effect on the countenance of Moses in beholding the glory of the Lord on Mount Sinai. “Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. But when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.” As the light of the sun causes even opaque bodies on which it shines, to appear luminous, so the special contemplation of the divine glory caused an irradiation of the soul of Moses, which was marvellously represented to the people by this external brightness of his countenance. And though he was not conscious of the splendour of his face, yet it was too resplendent for the people to behold; therefore he covered it with a veil when he spoke to them. But if a temporary view of the feebler displays of the divine

glory produces such a lustre in the countenance of a mortal, what must be the effect of the full glories of the heavenly world upon a glorified body!

4thly. *The body will be raised in power.* “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”

In the future world, the righteous serve God day and night in his temple: that is, they serve him without cessation or rest; and need, of course, faculties fitted to the performance of these services; faculties, whose vigour the magnitude of no duty shall overcome, and no continuance of action, fatigue or impair. Originally destined for an existence of this nature, the powers of the body will correspond with the activity of the mind; and will sustain without injury, defect, or decay, every undertaking which it is required to achieve, and will accomplish every work with enjoyment growing out of its exertions. Instead of its being exhausted or weakened, it seems evident from the sacred scriptures, that its strength, as well as its other attributes, will, like those of the mind, advance towards a higher and higher perfection throughout the ages of eternity.

We are constantly reminded that our mortal bodies are sown in weakness; for our manifold infirmities and death, in which they terminate, are peculiar evidences of human imbecility. And the state of the body, as shrouded, buried, and overrun by the most hateful worms, shows most affectingly how little all the power and abilities of men can do for them. But the body of a believer will not only be raised by Almighty power; it will also be endued with a power of which we have no conception, and be rendered capable of such motions, and of producing such effects, as surpass whatever we have seen, heard, or even imagined. It was the unanimous sentiment of the patriarchs, that no man could see God and live: that is, that no mortal could endure the full exhibition of the glories of the invisible world. The word of God does indeed import, that if the splendours of the heavenly state

were exhibited to our view, the sight so transcendently glorious, would so overwhelm us as to cause the dissolution of soul and body. With what strength, then, must glorified bodies be endued, unceasingly to behold the full displays of all the divine glories as they shine forth in the kingdom of heaven !

And are they for ever and ever to be most actively employed in the service of God without weariness or rest ? What an amazing contrast, compared with our weak, perishable bodies ! A difference as vast as that of a natural day, when contrasted with an eternal day. Our mortal frames are daily so accustomed to fatigue, and to the necessity of rest, that we can scarcely conceive it possible for them to be so changed as to be for ever freed from these, and invested with a power which is never weakened. And with what immortal vigour must they be endued, to be ever awake and uninterruptedly engaged in the manifold service of God, without a sensation of weariness, or the least desire of cessation from their employments ! Shall eternal ages, indeed, make no impression on them to create fatigue, and produce a tendency to weakness ? No ; eternity, with all its growing obligations and magnified duties, will only serve to render them more and more vigorous, and perpetuate their attribute of power with continued increase and exaltation—power eternally rising higher and higher in vigour and glory.

5thly. *The body will, at the resurrection, be endued with great activity.*

Various arguments might be adduced to establish this proposition. Both the perfection and the employments of the future state will require power of action the most consummate. In the world of glory, all is life and activity of the most perfect nature. No wearisomeness nor inactivity has ever been permitted to enter the abodes of the blessed. In the present state, inaction and slothfulness are characteristicks of the human frame. But how changed the scene in the resurrection, when the human body

will be endued with the attribute of perpetual activity and vigilance! How essential to a mortal body, are constant cessations from labour and periods of rest, that it may be enabled to perform the various duties of life! But a glorified body is so constituted as to be for ever on the wing; unceasingly engaged in employments which demand the highest degree of attention and activity.

The Saviour declares concerning the righteous in the future state, that they are as the angels of God in heaven: that is, possessing, in a near and kindred degree, the attributes which they possess. Accordingly, in the fourth chapter of Revelation, we are taught that the four and twenty elders, the representatives of the ancient and modern churches, are placed round about the throne, together with the Four Living ones, the representatives of the angelick host. The resemblance here exhibited, is such as strongly to exemplify this declaration of Christ. Their station is substantially the same; their employments the same.

The activity of angels is disclosed to us by the sacred canon in many passages, and in language of the greatest force. The ninth chapter of Daniel, particularly, contains in relation to these glorious intelligences, a remarkable illustration of this subject. Here we are told that Gabriel received a command in heaven, while Daniel was employed in prayer, to interpret his vision; and that being caused to fly swiftly, he touched Daniel about the time of the evening oblation. The activity here declared, is plainly superiour both to conception and calculation; and exceeds that of the sunbeams beyond any proportion perceptible by our minds. Similar to this representation will be the activity of the righteous in the future world.

In our present state, we are like worms of the dust, slowly and humbly creeping upon the earth appointed for our habitation. With how much exertion, and with what slow progress, we go from place to place!

Still, to act, is the end of all rational existence ; and to act at pleasure, the necessary concomitant of happy existence. Like Moses and Elias, if we obtain a part in the first resurrection, we may hereafter visit distant worlds with incomparably more ease, than we can now pass from one continent to another, and find the ocean of space by which they are separated, merely means of illustrating our activity and furnishing delightful opportunities of expatiating at our pleasure.

Is all heaven unceasingly active ? Do all the spirits of that blessed place, glow with raptures of divine love the most consummate ? And have glorified bodies a nature the most vigorous ? Then who can conceive how great and glorious will be their activity during the countless ages of eternity !

6thly. *The body at the resurrection will, of course, be invested with the character of endless youth.*

The forementioned attributes united, establish a complete basis to form this delightful characteristick. The remarks which have been already made tend strongly to establish the truth of the present proposition.

For illustration, let me observe, that the angels who appeared to Mary and the apostles after the resurrection of Christ, were, although created several thousand years before, still young ; and were regarded by them at first, as being young men. On them, duration, in this respect, makes no impression. Ages roll their years away, and leave them as they found them, in the bloom of youth, which shall continue for ever. Such is the character of all the people of God beyond the grave.

In the present state, old age comes on apace with a gloomy train of infirmities. Within a few years, the body goes bending and tottering to the tomb. The whole frame announces that time is encroaching to prostrate its vigour, beauty, and activity, in the dust. But how glorious the contrast of the human body, when it rises in the morn of the resur-

rection! Vigour, beauty, and eternal youth, then triumph over every infirmity of time and old age. Instead of being worn out with years, and rendered cumbersome, duration will serve to invigorate the bodies of the righteous, and render their youth more and more the perfection of beauty. The place, the company, and the glorified spirit, will excite inconceivable vivacity. No impression or sensation will ever mar the youthful vigour of a glorified body, but all things will inspirit and advance its youth to higher degrees of perfection for ever and ever.

7thly. *The body raised, will be a spiritual body.*
“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”

The body here sown, is a natural or animal body: that is, it resembles the bodies of animals in its original, its wants, appetites, pains, and diseases; and after death, turns to dust, as do other animal bodies. But hereafter it will be raised a spiritual body, capable of the spiritual work, worship, and happiness of heaven. Being entirely refined from all its sensual dross and low desires, it needs no more food, rest, sleep, or recreation; is no longer in a state to enjoy animal pleasures, and no more a hinderance to the soul in its holy exercises. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body; the one suited to our state on earth, the other to the heavenly state.

By a natural or animal body, is intended the present body of man, depending for its continuance upon the principle of animal life; the subject of innumerable frailties, and making a regular progress to dissolution. Of a spiritual body, it is not, perhaps, in our power to form an adequate conception. Some have supposed it to be a body, which having no need of the animal functions, is preserved in life by the mere inhabitation of the mind. Doubtless, the remarks already made, have pointed out the various attributes pertaining to a spiritual body.

In the following verses, this important subject is

treated in a fervent and sublime strain. After declaring that there is a spiritual body as well as an animal one, the apostle illustrates the declaration by observing, that the first Adam was made a living soul ; the last, a quickening spirit. That the first was of the earth, earthly; the second, the Lord from heaven. That they who are earthly, are like the earthly Adam ; and they who are heavenly, like the heavenly Adam. And that as we have borne the image of the earthly, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. This quickening energy does not relate merely to the souls of believers ; for Christ will also quicken their mortal bodies by his Spirit, that dwelleth in them; and this is what is here principally intended. Thus, they would not only bear the image of the heavenly Adam in their souls, but in their bodies also, which would be raised very different from their present appearance and capacities, and rendered glorious. We are next informed, that they who are alive at the sounding of the last trumpet, must necessarily undergo a change of the same nature as that which the dead will experience, and which is described in the preceding part of the chapter.

Hence we may see, that a spiritual body, will in its nature possess powers of life totally superior to those which we now possess, being destined to resemble, in this respect, the quickening Spirit whose image it will bear. None of its organs will prove temptations to sin, as in the present world ; but all of them will be wonderful aids to holiness. The sacred scriptures do frequently represent this circumstance as an essential distinction between that which is natural or animal, and that which is spiritual.

A spiritual body will also possess organs of perception and enjoyment of a far higher and more noble nature than those with which we are now furnished. Like Moses and Elias, the glorified man may be able, without danger of mistake, to direct

his way from the highest heavens to the distant regions of the universe. The attributes of the body will generally so resemble those of the mind, as to render the epithet spiritual, the proper description of its nature. Like the mind, it may inherently contain the principles of life and the seeds of immortality.

At the resurrection, the human body will doubtless, not only be greatly changed as to the quality of its substance, but also in regard to its form. There must be a great difference as it respects the organs and faculties of the body. Some that are necessary in the present state, will be useless in the future; and probably others, then become essential, will be substituted. In the future state, there will be no propagation of the human species; neither will there be necessity of food, as in the present state, for the support of the body. Hence, wonderfully changed must be the faculties and form of a spiritual body.

Perhaps we may consider the peculiar essence, or particular attribute of the epithet *spiritual*, as the climax or highest perfection of a glorified body, in relation to the forementioned qualities and attributes. It is that which will render in the highest degree perfect, the attributes of incorruption, immortality, glory, power, activity, and youth. How much it will be assimilated to a glorified spirit in its nature, employments, and enjoyments, cannot be determined. No doubt its spiritual attribute will be that refined and glorious quality, which will be the nearest resemblance of those exalted beings that compose the kingdom of glory.*

* The chief part of the particulars of this discourse, is selected from Dr. Dwight's Sermons.

SERMON XXVII.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE HUMAN BODY, AND WONDERFULLY GLORIOUS CHANGE.

I. CORINTHIANS XV. 53.

This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

THE discussion of the preceding subject suggests several interesting remarks.

1st. *Objections advanced against the doctrine of the resurrection, must be groundless.*

God is a being of almighty power, consequently can do whatsoever pleaseth him. He has created, or given positive existence; produced something, of which there was nothing. And surely, he who created the world, and formed human bodies out of the dust of the ground, is able to raise the same, when they become inanimate, and inspirit them with superior life and vigour. It is not a difficult work for Omnipotence to form lifeless, scattered particles of matter, into an organized body, endued with all the glorious attributes of immortality. Is any thing too hard for the almighty? No: though man may greatly err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

Although we cannot determine what particular particles or properties are necessary to constitute the same body, yet we may rest assured the Lord can, and that he will raise those which are essential. We do not hesitate to say we have now the same bodies which we inhabited in childhood, although they may have but few of those numerical particles. And though our bodies die and mingle with the dust, yet the omniscient and omnipotent God can

determine with absolute certainty what particles and peculiarities constitute the basis and essence of identity, and from their inherent qualities will form a regular, glorified body.

We are not capable of distinguishing bodies by the particles of which they are composed, but by figure, size, and features; and when our bodies shall be raised at the last day, we shall undoubtedly be conscious that they are the same bodies we inhabited while here on earth. And though this doctrine be mysterious, far above our comprehension, still this is no objection against its being a divine truth. The philosophy of the vegetation and growth of plants and trees, is as really incomprehensible to us, as the doctrine of the resurrection. When grain is committed to the earth, we cannot comprehend how the stalk shoots up and produces grain; but we are conscious that seeds thus committed, die, vegetate, and bring forth their own kind in abundance. Now, who is the man that can tell whether all, or a part, or whether any of the essential particles of the grain sown, compose that which is reaped?

All objections against the doctrine of the resurrection are unreasonable. Its denial is an article of infidelity. The Sadducees denied and opposed it; though the apostles were its strenuous advocates. At this day, some deny it; while others are earnestly contending, and proving from the scriptures, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. Some affirm that it is not necessary for the bodies of the dead to be raised, as the soul is the prime agent both of the righteous and wicked. Hence, they imagine other bodies or forms may as well be prepared for the everlasting dwelling of the soul. But such a supposition is contrary to both reason and divine revelation.

2dly. *Christianity unfolds a consistent system of religion.*

The doctrine of the resurrection exhibits an important specimen of the consistency of divine reve-

lation, in view of the different parts of this great system. The gospel every where discloses to us illustrious things concerning the future happiness and glory of the mind ; and at the same time, teaches us that it will be re-united to the body in the future world. The least reflection, however, will convince us, that such bodies as we now possess, must be very unsuitable mansions for minds destined to be thus glorious and happy. The mind is prepared for an elegant mansion. Such a body as our mortal frame, would only become its prison. The resurrection that divine light discovers to us, that the body shall be fitted to become the habitation of a sanctified and immortal mind, and prove to it a most useful and delightful companion throughout eternity. Here we learn, that the body will be suited to all the perceptions, employments, and glories of the mind ; and that the soul in the possession of this residence, will become more exalted and blessed. Thus this part of the Christian system is exactly proportioned to the rest, and strongly illustrative of the wisdom and goodness of its Author.

3dly. *The doctrine of the resurrection is a doctrine of revelation only.*

To the standard of divine truth we must bring our sentiments in relation to this subject, to determine whether they be correct or not. Of this doctrine, not a trace can be found in all the investigations of philosophy. It must, indeed, be acknowledged to lie beyond the reach of reason ; and in its very nature, to be hidden from the most scrutinizing inquiry. The resurrection itself is an event depending absolutely on the will, as well as on the power of God ; and what he will choose to do with respect to this subject, no being but himself can determine.

Yet no doctrine devised by philosophy concerning man, is so sublime, so delightful, or so fitted to furnish consolation and hope to beings whose life in this world is but a moment, and whose end is the grave. All who have gone before him, have pointed

their feet to its silent chambers; and not one of them returned, to announce that an opening has been discovered from their dreary residence, to some other more lightsome and more desirable region. No lamp illumines the midnight within. In absolute despair, he calls upon philosophy to cheer his drooping mind; but he calls in vain. She has no consolations for herself; and can therefore administer none to him. Here, she coldly and sullenly cries, is the end of man! From nothing he sprang; to nothing he returns. All that remains of him is dust, which here is mingled for ever with its native earth.

At this sullen moment of despair, Revelation approaches, and with a command at once awful and delightful, exclaims—"Lazarus, come forth! We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Divine revelation alone avers, that at the end of time, immediately preceding the general judgement, all that shall then be on the earth or in their graves, shall come forth; and every soul and body of the whole human family be summoned before the judgement-seat of Christ.

4thly. *Wisdom admonishes to a preparation for the future well-being of the body.*

If the human frame, in view of the distinction to which it is entitled beyond the grave, is of incalculable value; then let none of its members serve as instruments of unrighteousness unto iniquity, but of righteousness unto holiness. Let not our concern be to make provision for the lusts of the flesh; but for the wonderful attributes of a glorified body. Let both the temporal and the eternal welfare of these frail tabernacles be motives to direct our ways. Let them not be degraded by any base deed; but let us so love, nourish, and cherish them, that we

shall, with the most effectual care, secure their revival to all that distinction and enjoyment which a blessed resurrection gloriously proffers.

What a desirable and glorious change awaits the bodies as well as the souls of the righteous! The human frame, even in this mortal state, is wonderfully made; but in the resurrection it will be so refined and beautified as to exhibit an effulgence and perfection indescribable. And the different degrees of splendour and glory, which immortal bodies will possess, will doubtless be imparted according to the measure of holiness as to their respective minds. Then if any man would be truly wise and set that value upon his existence as becometh a human being, enlightened by divine revelation, he will dedicate himself unreservedly both soul and body to the service of his God and Saviour both now and for evermore.

5thly. *We are encouraged to entertain the highest apprehensions concerning the future glory of the mind.*

If the resurrection will produce such great and delightful things for the inferior nature, what must we suppose will be the future allotments of the mind, in its nature imperishable and eternal? The utmost efforts of human imagination cannot equal the future glory of the body, as revealed in the word of God. How exceeding abundantly, then, above all that we are able to ask or think, will the mind be exalted, adorned, and enraptured, by Him whose glory and delight is to bless, and who has already enstamped it with his own glorious image! In the world of glory, the mind, united to a spiritual body, will perceive more clearly, enjoy more exquisitely, and act more gloriously, than it would do if disembodied. This subject may not only be improved by way of inference, to show that the souls of the righteous will be hereafter completely blessed, but incomparably, inconceivably glorious.

6thly. *This subject is no ground of comfort, but of alarm, to the ungodly and impenitent.*

Terrible thought to all unrighteous, unbelieving sinners, that at the resurrection, the bodies of all the unjust will come forth from their graves, like guilty prisoners and condemned criminals, to be a source of additional woes to the soul for ever and ever! Has the Lord given some of you, my hearers, healthful and active frames? and do you dote upon their vigour and beauty? Does the framer of your bodies call upon you to employ them in his service? and have you never bowed the knee, nor turned your eyes, nor extended your hands toward heaven in prayer? Do you say your tongues are your own? And are your hearts so filled with self-importance, that you scorn to use your lips as suppliants, in addressing the throne of divine grace for mercy, and pleading earnestly for the pardon of your sins? Does the blessed Redeemer admonish you to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? and do you make it your main concern to ornament the body, accounting its pleasures as your chief joy? Alas! what folly and madness, so to think and act, as most fatally to ruin both the body, and your immortal souls! Notwithstanding all your care and indulgence of your mortal frames, if you die in impenitence, they will be raised to shame and everlasting contempt. If they come forth with the attributes of incorruption, strength, and activity, how will they express with awful horrour, the direful passions and torments of your wretched existence! They will not lessen, but augment, your intolerable, eternal pains.

Doleful reflection! to endure the curses of the God of heaven in your souls and bodies for ever and ever, without any mixture of mercy! Those bodies which appear in the house of God, in the time of his solemn worship, in a careless and indecent manner, will be far from levity when summoned to the judgement. The wicked will be filled

with horrour, when their eyes shall behold the Lord Jesus revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those ears that now listen to the enchanting sounds of temptation with eagerness and delight, and hear the inviting calls of the gospel with indifference and disgust, will be everlasting inlets of anguish to the soul. How will both the soul and body of every Christless sinner be overwhelmed with agony and seized with eternal consternation, when the final sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed," shall be pronounced! Let me remark, that as glorious and delightful as the doctrine of the resurrection is to saints, so inglorious and dreadful must it be to sinners.

7thly. *This subject is precious and profitable to saints.*

By living a few years in these animal bodies, we naturally become attached to them; and it is affecting to think they must shortly decay, become putrefaction, and a mass of vile dust. With secret disgust, and painful sensations, our minds turn from the thought.

But in joyful contemplation, the believer, with an eye of faith, can look beyond the grave to the resurrection, which will cause an amazing and glorious exchange. Is such a one afflicted with bodily infirmities, pained with acute diseases? Do any bear a weak, decaying body, which retards them in their journey towards the heavenly Canaan? Let such take courage, and not despond. Be comforted and strengthened; for in the resurrection God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain. Yes, your light and temporary afflictions will shortly be exchanged for an eternal and inconceivable weight of glory.

They who have lost near and dear pious relatives and friends, may receive consolation in the view of

this subject. Have you, reader or hearer, seen the eyes of such, which once sparkled with life and beauty, rolled in death ; that tongue, which once instructed and encouraged, sealed in solemn silence ; and the whole frame a lifeless corpse, turning to the food of worms ? Console yourselves. At the resurrection, their bodies will be rendered incorruptible, glorious, spiritual bodies, fashioned like unto Christ's own glorious body. Then let divine light illumine your understandings. Let heavenly rays beam with consolation upon your souls.

Christian friends, O ! frequently contemplate the wonderful, the delightful, and glorious change your frail, decaying tabernacles will experience in the morn of the resurrection. Extend your thoughts a little forward, what divine and blessed realities are presented ! Shortly the trump of God will proclaim, Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment. That is the all-powerful voice, which will refine and purify the sleeping dust of every believer, and change it into all the attributes of a spiritual and immortal body. What a glorious morn will burst upon your sight, when the archangel shall summon you to come forth to all the excellence and blessedness of the endless day of your God ! And shall not the prospect of the glories of the heavenly world inspire you with Christian fortitude, under the trials of your pilgrimage state ? It is your privilege to be profited here below, in view of the precious, extatrick truths flowing from this subject. Yet a little while, and you will mount triumphing on the celestial wings of a glorified body, soaring for ever higher in degrees of perfection ; and with seraphick love, shouting God's praises in endless strains.

SERMON XXVIII.

MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL ENCOURAGED TO HOLD FORTH VARIETY, AS A PROMINENT TRAIT IN THEIR PUBLICK DISCOURSES.

MATTHEW XIII. 52.

Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old.

THESE words the Saviour addressed to his disciples immediately after the delivery of a number of important parables. While apart from the multitude, he demanded whether they understood the things he had related. They readily answered in the affirmative, though perhaps too confidently. Christ, however, did not administer rebuke; but his answer tended to show the importance of their being skilled in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord: Then said he unto them—"Therefore, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old."

Let us attend to a brief exposition of these words. The scribes were at this time the teachers of the Jews, under the Jewish dispensation; and the apostles, with their successors in the ministry, were to be the teachers of the Gentiles, under the Christian dispensation. Every one of them, therefore, ought to be a scribe well instructed in all things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. This the Saviour represented under the similitude of a householder, who has to provide for a large family. Such a one will take care to have a stock of provisions on hand

for their supply, to which he will be continually adding those things which he judges needful or useful. Thus the people would depend on the apostles, and other ministers of Christ, as stewards of the mysteries of God, who were appointed to dispense to them the bread of life. They should, therefore, carefully treasure up in their understanding and heart, what they had learned; and add to their fund of knowledge continually, by deriving fresh instruction from what they see, hear, and experience. Then, they would be able to bring forth old truth, with new observations, illustrations, and exhortations; and to lead the people forward in knowledge, as they made progress themselves. In accordance with these remarks, the apostle Paul addresses his Corinthian brethren in the following terms : "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. Thus we are reminded, that *they* ought to be diligent, who have not only to be wise for themselves, but to dispense the wisdom of God to others.

These introductory observations serve to show, that by the term *scribe*, is to be understood a minister of the gospel. But to be qualified for this important office, a man must be taught of God, by having his heart renewed by his Holy Spirit, and his understanding richly stored with the manifold truths of divine revelation. Such a one will bring forth from his extensive store of knowledge, things both new and old, to the people of his stewardship. One great object in his studies and researches will be to have variety in his instructions.

In the prosecution of the present subject, my design is to exhibit some of the encouragements, and show how important it is that ministers of the gospel hold forth variety as a prominent trait in their publick discourses.

1st. *The kingdom of God is sufficiently large to produce materials for a variety of subjects.*

The field of theology is as vast as the works of creation, providence, and redemption, which God has made known to man; and ideas and motives may be presented, as varied and interesting as can be drawn from all the realities of heaven, earth, and hell. The Lord has not limited those who are called to preach his word, as it respects means of knowledge and excellent attainments; but he has made rich provision, and given ample scope for the continued enlargement of all the human faculties, and the improvement of ministerial talents. As their station is an elevated and important one, which must be supported by a rich treasure and increasing revenue, so an extensive, an unbounded field, is furnished to yield copious and permanent supplies. And if any are straitened, it cannot be for the want of means and diversity of objects; but because they will not arise to take an extensive view of the kingdom of God.

It is sometimes observed, that ministers of the gospel should be dismissed from the people of their charge, to take the oversight of some other congregation; and the reason assigned is expediency; as though they had exhausted the fund of theology, of mental instruction, and Christian edification. Six or ten years, at most, are deemed the extent that one man should continue steadily as the pastor of any church. But why? Is there not a sufficient variety of interesting texts, in both the Old and New Testaments? Or has not the Lord provided resources manifold to that extent that they can be illustrated with variety of manner, of observations, of similitudes, and with a newness of interest? Surely in these there can be no lack, no deficiency.

A steward may not be devoted to the interest of his master, and hence come short of accomplishing his work; notwithstanding, for his delinquency he is to be blamed. But if he be really unable to give himself wholly to his work, he is entitled to pity and compassion. The probable reason, however, why

there is a want of variety in the sermons of many, is, that they have viewed the study of theology as a science of a very limited range. They do not take an extensive survey of that wide and divine field which is presented before them. They do not well consider how intimately connected is the economy of nature with the economy of redemption; and that it is the same God, that contrived the system of nature, who is also the author of eternal salvation to all that love and serve him. But it is unquestionably unbecoming for a divine, or for any man, to overlook or to undervalue any of the modes by which the Divine Being is pleased to make known his nature and perfections to mankind.

If we consider the system, or study of theology, in its most extensive sense, in its relations to the Supreme Being, to his past and present dispensations of the human race, to the present circumstances and future destiny of man, and to the physical and moral condition of all the sentient and intelligent beings of which we have any intimation, we must view it as the most varied and comprehensive of all the sciences; as it embraces within its compass all the other departments of useful knowledge both human and divine. All the moral arts and sciences may be considered as having a direct bearing on theology as the grand central point; and as having a certain tendency to promote its important objects. Religion, rightly understood, never disdains to derive her supports and illustrations from the resources of science, and the system of nature; for the investigations of philosophy into its economy, are only inquiries into the plans and operations of Deity. Moral philosophy especially, ought always to consider it as her highest honour to walk as a hand-maid in the train of that religion, which points out the path to eternal bliss. And it should not be considered as in opposition to true religion, nor in hostile array to vital piety; for philosophy and religion should march hand in hand to the portals of immor-

tality. Geography and geology, history and chronology, anatomy and physiology, astronomy and philosophy, do all come within the province of the divine; for scriptural facts may be the more extensively illustrated by the aid of those arts and sciences, which serve to elucidate the works of God, exhibited in the system of nature. These subjects are highly favourable to the promotion of the important objects of religion, and they present materials, that ministers of the gospel may be neither barren, nor unfruitful; but always abounding in the work of the Lord, by bringing forth from their manifold and increasing treasure, things both new and old.

2dly. *Variety in their religious instructions, is admirably adapted to excite the attention of their hearers.*

They are called to address intelligent beings, whether saints or sinners, who have capacities capable of enlargement and of great attainments. And the Lord has endued them with such active principles in the very constitution of their natures, as are most readily excited by new subjects. The experience of every age, and the observation of every class of men, bear testimony to this fact, that novelty and variety are highly requisite to arouse the attention, not only of the more ignorant, but even of the more intelligent part of mankind, and to excite them to make progress in the path of moral and intellectual improvement. The principle of curiosity, which appears at a very early period of life, and which the variegated scenery and novel objects of nature tend to stimulate and to gratify, instead of being depressed and decried as it relates to the things of religion, ought to be encouraged and cultivated in the minds both of the old and the young. It is a principle which God himself has implanted in our natures for wise and important purposes, and requires only to be chastened and directed in a proper channel, so as to become one of the most powerful auxiliaries in the cause of religion, and of moral and intellectual im-

provement. To gratify this principle, and to increase its activity, the Creator has adorned our globe with a combination of beauties and sublimities, strewed in endless variety over all its different regions. And as the system of nature, in all its parts, presents a boundless variety of scenery to arouse the attention and to gratify the desire for novelty, so the revelation of God contained in the sacred records, displays a diversified combination of the most sublime and interesting subjects and events. And as the scenes of nature and those of revelation are thus wonderfully diversified, to excite the attention of intelligent beings, and to gratify the desire for variety, so we have every reason to believe that the scenes, objects, and dispensations which will be displayed in the heavenly world, will be incomparably more grand and diversified. When we consider the immensity of God's universal kingdom, and the numerous systems, and worlds, and beings, comprehended within its vast expanse ; and that the energies of creating power may be for ever exerted in raising new worlds into existence, we may rest assured that the desire of variety and novelty in holy intelligences, will be completely gratified throughout an endless succession of existence ; and that the most luxuriant imagination in its boldest excursions, can never go beyond the reality of those scenes of diversified grandeur which the heaven of heavens will display.

But away heated imagination, and violent enthusiasm ! Should not ministers of the gospel beware, lest they instil into the minds of their hearers, a vain curiosity, and excite an itching ear ? Truly, my hearers. But the most effectual method for this is, that they excite in them a laudable curiosity, and thus prepare the way for sound doctrine. A rich diversity of topicks from the pulpit, would afford manifold excitements to rouse this principle into exercise, and to direct the mind to the contemplation of the marvellous word and wonderful works of God. What encouragement, then, for every minister of the

gospel to be zealous to bring forth from an inexhaustible treasure, things both new and old !

3dly. *To hold forth variety as a prominent trait, would be in accordance with the divine economy in the revelation which God has given to man.*

Not only does the face of nature exhibit boundless variety, and the heavens, bespangled with stars, but the volume of divine truth also exhibits the same diversity of scenery. And is it not becoming the heralds of salvation, to endeavour in some feeble degree to become imitators of the Author of their messages ? Certainly it cannot be denied, that in the writings both of the Old and New Testament, as in all the other displays and manifestations of the Almighty, divine perfection and providence are exhibited in the most diversified aspects. Let some of the facts, events, and transactions, which are recorded for our instruction, be briefly noticed. I shall quote the particulars as arranged in the Christian Philosopher, by Thomas Dick ; to which work I am not only indebted for ideas on this subject, but also for a number of whole pages. He observes, We have recorded a history of the creation and arrangement of our globe ; of the formation of the first human pair ; of their primeval innocence, temptation, and fall ; of the arts which were cultivated in the first ages of the world ; of the desperate increase of human wickedness ; of the building of the ark ; of the drowning of the world by a universal deluge ; and of the burning of Sodom by fire from heaven. We will now pass to the account of the origin of languages ; of the dividing of the Red Sea ; of the journeying of the tribes of Israel through the deserts of Arabia ; of their conquest of the promised land, and their wars with the nations of Canaan ; of the corporeal translation of Elijah from earth to heaven ; of the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh, the benevolent miracles he performed, and the triumphs he obtained over all the powers of earth and hell. We are here presented

with the most interesting and affecting narratives, elegies, dramatick poems, and triumphal songs; with views of society in the earliest ages of the world, when the lives of men were prolonged to nearly a thousand years; with splendid miracles performed in the land of Egypt, in the wilderness of Horeb, and in the field of Zoan; when the sun and moon stood still in their habitation; when the waters of the great deep were divided, and mountains shook and trembled at the presence of Jehovah. We are favoured with the history of the glorious marching of a whole nation through the deserts of Sinai, under the guidance of a miraculous pillar of cloud and fire; of the visits of celestial messengers and the visible symbols of a present Deity. We are addressed with prophetical delineations of the present and future condition of the race of Adam; with descriptions of the power, wisdom, love, and majesty of the Almighty, and of his operations in heaven and earth; and with the results and bearings of the economy of redemption. Divine songs, odes, and hymns, composed by angels and inspired men; maxims of moral wisdom, examples of sublime eloquence, of strength of reasoning, and of manly boldness of reproof; also proverbs, parables, allegories, exhortations, promises, threatenings, and consolatory addresses, are promulgated with abundance of variety of manner, and peculiar occasions and circumstances. In short, in the word of God we have detailed, in the greatest and most interesting variations, history, antiquities, voyages, travels, philosophy, geography, natural and moral science, biography, arts, epick poetry, epistles, memoirs, delineations of nature, sketches of human character, moral precepts, prophecies, miracles, narrations, wonderful providences, marvellous deliverances, the phenomena of the air, the waters, and the earth. The past, the present, and the future scenes of the world are all blended together in one vast, harmonious system, without artificial order; but with a

majesty and grandeur, corresponding to the style of all the other works of God. And we cannot deny but that they are calculated to interest and gratify the principle of curiosity ; while they convey doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, to make the man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished to every good work.

Now since the book of nature and the book of revelation ; since all the manifestations of the Creator in heaven and earth, are characterized by their sublime and diversified aspect, let me ask, Why should not ministers of the gospel be imitators of God, in displaying the diversified grandeur of his kingdom of providence and grace, before the minds of those whom they profess to instruct ? Why should they confine their views to a few points in the Christian system ; to a few stones in the fabrick of the divine operations, when a wide and unbounded prospect lies before them ? Why should they not rather attempt to rouse the moral and intellectual energies of mankind from the pulpit and press, by exhibiting the boundless variety of aspect which the revelations of Heaven present, that men may learn with intelligence and devout contemplation to meditate on all the works of the Lord, and to talk of all his doings ? By enlarging and diversifying the topicks of religious discussion, they would have it in their power to spread out an intellectual feast to allure and gratify every variety of taste. The young and the old, the learned and the unlearned, yea, even the careless and the ignorant, the sceptical and dissipated, might be frequently allured, by the selection of a judicious variety of striking and impressive objects and descriptions, to partake of those mental enjoyments which might ultimately issue in the happiest results. The man of an inquisitive turn of mind, who is wont to throw every thing aside that has the appearance of religion, on the account of its dulness to him, might have his curiosity excited and gratified amidst an interesting

variety; and from perceiving the bearing on the great realities of religion both for the present and future state, might be led to serious inquiry after the path that leads to immortality. In a word, to associate and intersperse the arts and sciences, and every department of useful knowledge, with divine subjects, is to consecrate them to their original and legitimate ends, and to present religion to the minds of men in its most sublime, comprehensive, and attractive form, corresponding to what appears to be the design of the Creator, in all the manifestations he has given of himself, in the system of nature, in the operations of Providence, and in the economy of Redemption.

It may be replied, that the Lord has given a revelation to mankind in view of what they are, and not of what they ought to be; therefore he was graciously pleased to grant one suited to their fallen condition. But is it not the duty of ministers of the gospel to address them as intelligent beings, who have sinned, and not merely as those who have never transgressed? Are they not in some measure to follow that diversified and divine pattern which God has put into their hands as a guide and rule for their imitation? Or shall mortal man presume to be wiser than his Maker? Because the Lord gives mandates and law to all the holy and exalted beings that surround his throne, is he the less capable of discerning what instructions, methods, means, and ways, would be the most suitable to be unfolded to the inhabitants of this lower world? Or because his ambassadors are here on the ground, and see with what a wicked and rebellious race they have to treat, shall they pretend to be wise above what he has written, by greatly retrenching and circumscribing his communications? Can they teach their King knowledge, and instruct him in wisdom? As his understanding is infinite, he could certainly foresee what things would be best to be revealed to our apostate race, dead in trespasses and sins. Doubtless he who gave

existence to the inhabitants of the earth, and who implanted in them the various principles of their animal, intellectual, and moral natures, could determine what things would be the most favourable and effectual to arouse their energies, excite their attention, and awake them to a solicitous inquiry concerning divine and eternal realities. Some of the varieties and glorious novelties which God has not been ashamed, but pleased to have recorded in his holy word, have been named. And what an interesting variety would be presented, were they chosen as the foundation of religious and publick discourses! This is one great and important end, for which they were revealed to man. They are dispersed throughout the sacred pages, and are so valuable that men should seek for them as for hidden treasures. But especially we may be led to see, that if ministers of the gospel would hold forth variety in their publick discourses as a prominent trait, their conduct would be in accordance with the divine economy, as manifested in the system of revelation.

4thly. *The examples of holy men of old, of the Saviour and the apostles, may be held up for imitation.*

The writings of Moses are extensive not only as historical records, but they are a rich fund from which may be derived abundant instructions relating to social, civil, and religious life. Besides those laws and regulations which were peculiar to the Jewish nation, a great variety of important rules are laid down to direct us in the various pursuits of life, and in the more immediate duties of religion. The Psalms of David are full of piety, and are almost a continual scene of devotion; but how marvellous for their abundant variety of interesting subjects! The Proverbs of Solomon are a continued series of diversified texts, relating to worldly concerns, to the propriety or impropriety of human conduct, to moral principle, and to a godly or ungodly life. Isaiah and Jeremiah abound with beautiful and sublime varieties. The Saviour is the most interesting preacher,

both as it respects temporal concerns and Christian morality, as well as those more solemn truths which immediately relate to eternity. Perhaps some may be ready to imagine the apostle Paul was averse to a variety of subjects in the preaching of the word, because he declared to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This expression shows that the apostle considered his great work and main business to be the preaching of the gospel; and that in the expounding of the Old Testament, in his conversation and sermons, he aimed to prove that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, who was to come and be offered as a sacrifice for sin. And the more effectually to accomplish this great object, he avows, "I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." By the expression, "whole counsel of God," is not to be understood merely the five Calvinistical points; but that as he had opportunity, he unfolded all the great and important doctrines and duties of Christianity. The writings of this great apostle of the Gentiles, and his avowal, "I am made all things unto all men, that I might by all means save some," may serve to evince his variously extended views in relation to the subject now under consideration.

It may be replied, That the life of one man is far too short to exhibit all the varied subjects of some of the sacred historians, much more to endeavour to bring forward the varieties of them all. Then, as ministers have opportunity, let them abound with an interesting variety, and be imitators of those whom God holds forth as worthy ensamples. In the present age, some imitate the goodly prophetical and apostolical examples; and instead of having all their ministerial instructions confined within a very small compass, take a wide range as it respects their subjects and illustrations. And yet there is room for others to expatiate in the divine field, and to collect rich materials to add to their treasure. How much

of it is still uncultivated ; but which will unquestionably be improved as a foundation for religious discourses, and a means of accomplishing the various ends of the ministerial office ! Then let us, my brethren, be encouraged to hold forth an interesting variety, as a prominent trait in our religious discourses, as we are presented with many manly, glorious, and godlike examples.

5thly. *An extensive variety in publick discourses, is the method best calculated to repress vice, and promote virtue.*

One important object in the topicks and discussions from the pulpit, is the present good of the community. The temporal welfare of individuals, of families, and society, demands the attention of Zion's watchmen; for a proper management of worldly concerns, and the morals of a people, are intimately connected with the important duties and interest of the gospel. Hence, vice in all its deformities and destructive tendencies, must be depicted; and the beauties and beneficial results of virtue strikingly delineated. But in order to this, appropriate discourses are highly important. And a sermon on morality should not be a rare thing, a phenomenon: but a portion of almost every discourse should be of such a nature. If a minister but once a year address his people on the subject of morals, and that discourse be a declamatory moral harangue, they will not be much impressed nor benefited. But, if his discourses be frequently interwoven with Christian morality, they will believe him serious and interested in the truths he delivers ; and virtue and vice will not be considered as empty names.

However, it is well known that some professors of religion imagine, that sermons on morality are almost useless, if not detrimental to the cause of Christ. Their souls are pained whenever they hear a text named of a moral nature. But let us query. How can they read their Bibles without being much grieved at heart ? How can the multiplicity of

moral texts be but grating to their feelings? Can they not discern them? Then they must have exerted all their mental faculties to have shut their eyes. But what would such have? Truly, if the sermons of their minister accord with their views, they must be all comprised in a small routine of fundamental and doctrinal points; and an additional one, containing all their metaphysical peculiarities of a Hopkinsian or Calvinistical creed, as the climax of their divinity. If such have indeed tasted the delights of renewing grace and redeeming love, how much is it to be lamented that they have not their hearts enlarged! From a false zeal of contending for the fundamentals of religion, and of being pillars in the church, they may render themselves a burden to their brethren, and stumbling-blocks to the world.

What a contrast in the views, preaching, and life of the Saviour, that great and divine teacher of morality! He not only delivered the most weighty messages relating to eternal realities, but he inculcated all the moral virtues, and went about doing good; granting healing to the sick, hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, and administering to the temporal wants of men. And did the divine Redeemer, whose great object was to be the physician of souls, do well to become the physician of the body, and to discover a lively interest for the present well-being of man? Then let not his ministers think they demean themselves, to copy his worthy and glorious example. Shall objects of pity and charity have no claim to their addresses and pleas from the pulpit? Are there no afflicted, suffering widows, whose hearts the irregularities of a husband have broken? No half-famished orphans, whom the indolence, intemperance, or excesses of a father, have reduced to want? Surely society, burdened with manifold evils, cries aloud for help from the discourses of the minister in the pulpit, and in his volume of sermons. Then let the varied topicks of Christian morality have their due weight.

and share in the publick discharge of the ministerial office.

6thly. *An interesting variety tends greatly to the promotion of useful knowledge, and the building up of the church in the most holy faith.*

An ingenious and intelligent minister has it in his power greatly to enlighten the congregation over which he may be appointed a pastor. And if his subjects be wisely chosen, they will be of such a nature and variety as will tend to enlarge the views of his hearers, to excite a spirit of inquiry, and to instruct them in many useful and important truths. Hence, piety will be encouraged and promoted ; for believers must grow in knowledge, in order to their growth in grace. Thus, an enlightened and faithful minister will be a burning and shining light in the midst of his people, who, from his extended views, will be enabled to take an extensive survey of the kingdom of God. And the man who connects the different departments of knowledge, and the discoveries of science with his prospects of God's universal dominion and government, can with his mental eye, traverse the different regions of the earth, and penetrate into the most distant and retired recesses, where human beings have their residence. He can contemplate and adore the conduct of divine sovereignty, in leaving so many nations to grope amidst the darkness of heathen idolatry ; can trace the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, as they gradually arise to illumine the benighted tribes of men ; can realize, in some measure, the glorious and happy scenes which will be displayed in the future ages of time, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ ; and when the everlasting gospel shall be published, and its blessings distributed among all who dwell upon the face of the earth. With his mental sight he can view the planetary worlds, and survey far more spacious globes than ours, peopled with a higher order of intelligences, arranged and super-

intended by the same almighty Sovereign, who doth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth. With enlarged views he exclaims, "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord ? who can show forth all his praise?" A gospel minister, who bringeth forth from his treasure things new and old, renders his people highly exalted in point of privilege; for they have an important aid, in acquiring new and interesting ideas, and in enlarging their views of the works of creation, providence, and redemption.

But how different the prospects of those who have a religious teacher that is confined to a narrow circle in his publick discourses! Sameness must be a peculiar trait in his instructions; and with a few exceptions, the people of his charge will have contracted and illiberal views. While they make but little progress in divine or useful knowledge, they will verify the saying, "Like priest, like people." And indeed how strangely ignorant are the majority of some congregations respecting the various doctrines and duties of Christianity, and other important and interesting truths closely connected with them! The range of subjects to which the minds of some professing Christians seem to be confined, may be comprised within the limits of five or six chapters of the New Testament. And how very narrow and limited are their ideas respecting the universal kingdom of Jehovah, and the range of his operations! The views of some individuals are confined chiefly within the limits of their own parish; or at farthest, extend only to the sensible horizon, which forms the boundary of their sight. Within this narrow circle, all their ideas of God, of religion, and of the relations of intelligent beings to each other, are chiefly circumscribed. What may be the nature of the vast assemblage of shining points, which adorn the canopy of their habitation, and the ends they are destined to accomplish in the plan of the Creator's operations, they consider as no part of their province to inquire. There is a certain narrowness

of view, and principle of selfishness, that pervade the minds of many professors of religion, which lead them to conclude, that if they can but secure their own personal salvation, they need give themselves no trouble about the glory and extent of the kingdom of the Most High. What need we care, say they, about nations in the far distant parts of the world, and about the divine works in the planets and stars: our business is to attend to the spiritual interests of our souls. But such persons seem not fully to understand in what salvation really consists, and what is conducive to their spiritual growth; nor to appreciate those tempers and habits which will qualify them for the enjoyment of eternal life. It forms but a very slender evidence of their being the children of God, if they wish to rest satisfied with the most scanty and vague conceptions of his works; and if they do not ardently aspire after a more enlarged view of the greatness and glory of his empire, and of whatever may tend to expand their conceptions of the inheritance of saints in light.

But how great the influence of a gospel minister over the minds of the generality of his hearers, either to render contracted or to enlarge their views; to make them bigots, or to cause them to abound in all Christian and useful knowledge. If the pastor feed his flock from all that richness of provision which the great Shepherd, in his abundant fulness, has provided, instead of having leanness sent into their souls, they will enjoy a feast of fat things. Each one will have his portion of meat in due season, while the whole will be edified. Then what encouragement for ministers of the gospel to hold forth variety as a prominent trait in their publick discourses.

7thly. *The beneficial influence on the minds of young people.*

If an extensive variety of topicks should be introduced into the publick discourses of the sanctuary, by connecting the manifestations of Deity in the system of nature, and the discoveries of science

with the objects of religion, it would have a tendency to allure the attention of the young to religious subjects, and to afford mental entertainment and moral instruction to intelligent minds of every description. And certainly every wise and well instructed scribe must feel a lively interest in so gaining their attention, as to excite them to an inquiry of the great things of the kingdom. Are youth the peculiar hope of a minister's usefulness? Then they certainly claim a particular regard in the choice of his subjects and illustrations. But variety and novelty are highly favourable to attract the notice and impress the minds of the rising generation. Are young persons generally fond of reading novels? And are they much in quest of new things? Then let singular texts and subjects be occasionally chosen and elucidated, that they may be led to a perusal of the holy scriptures in view of the marvellous things therein recorded. Doubtless, if a suitable portion of the manifold varieties, singular events, and wonderful phenomena of divine revelation, should be judiciously illustrated from the pulpit, many young people, from a laudable curiosity, would be incited to hear the word preached with readiness, and would eagerly peruse the sacred volume for entertainment and instruction. Does the Bible abound with such a variety of novelties and divine wonders only to be read, and not to be the theme of gospel heralds? Do not the age, the active principles, and dearest interest of children and youth, in a special manner, require that they derive a due portion of food from such nutritive provision?

I am well aware that some may be ready to reply, Young people are so thoughtless concerning religious subjects, and so bent on the vanities of youth, that they should be addressed with subjects of the most pungent and alarming nature. But is it not a fact, that the generality of youth do frequently have their minds much exercised about the concerns of their souls? Moreover, does not a continued series

of doctrinal and terrifying subjects, serve to impress on their thoughts, that the duties and essence of religion are very much of a gloomy and disconsolate nature ? Then may they not only hear discourses of the most solemn import, but let the varied peculiarities and beauties of the gospel be delineated ; that Christianity be not presented to their youthful and tender minds in a forbidding aspect, but in its most attractive charms and lovely forms. Would a minister of the gospel be influential and useful among this important class of his hearers, let his conversation and sermons evince his respect for them, and manifest his solicitations for their present and future well-being. Let them not only be affectionately reprobred and warned, but encouraged, animated, and drawn by all the varied motives and excitements which can be derived from the volume of divine truth. Their youthful days and vigour of life, their golden period of existence, plead for an interesting variety in the instructions of their pastor.

8thly. *To enlarge congregations and build up society, let ministers of the gospel hold forth variety as a prominent trait in their publick discourses.*

The beneficial effects resulting to Christian society and to the community, from an extensive range of subjects well chosen, and from a variety of apt illustrations, are numerous ; and that of the satisfaction and enlargement of the people of a minister's charge, is of great consequence. There are the learned and the unlearned, the diligent inquirer after truth and the slothful, the moral and the immoral, within the limits of almost every parish ; and there is a rich plenitude in the divine word, from which something may be brought forth appropriate to their diversified taste and circumstances. And, in scattered and broken societies, how essential that the instructions of the sanctuary have an interesting variety ; that the people be built up, and not broken down ! But how often, and indeed how justly, is the complaint made, that there is a great sameness in the topicks

and discussions of the pulpit ! How many in the ministry have all their subjects comprised within a very small circle, and their illustrations quite limited ! And, on the same account, comparatively few enter the threshold of the sanctuary ; hence, ministerial usefulness is greatly restricted. What next ? The feeble church is deprived of their pastor. It is doubtless true, that in many places, different sects and indifference to a preached gospel, cause societies to be in a divided and broken state. But, in many instances, where few assemble together on the Lord's day, respectable congregations might be collected by a scribe, who would hold forth variety as a prominent trait in his publick discourses. It is a matter of fact, that a certain number of texts and topicks are so frequently introduced by ministers of the gospel, that when one of them is named, no small part of the congregation wish themselves home, or else invite sleep. Then let new subjects be introduced, as often as those that are old ; and this variety will prove a remedy for such lamentable effects. Let ministers generally select some of the varied and interesting texts which have not yet been discussed in the sanctuary ; and the expressions, " singularity and curious minded," will not fall from the tongues of the illiberal and illiterate.

Since God, in the course of his providence, has disclosed to the present age a far more expansive view of the glory of his kingdom than former ages could obtain, for the purpose of illustrating the revelations of his word, shall not proportionate advances, and suitable improvements, be attempted ? Who will dare assert, that the scribe who has access by his studious efforts, to contemplate this wondrous scene and its rising grandeur, and yet withdraws from communicating to the people the increasing displays of the divine glory, does not thereby hazard the divine displeasure ? In relation to this point, the following passage deserves a serious consideration : " Because they regard not the works

of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands, he shall destroy them and not build them up." For a minister to be extensively useful in his preaching, it is not only necessary that the people of God hear him, but that many of the impenitent attend his publick ministrations. And unless this be accomplished, one great end of his ministry is frustrated. The text suggests a method of accomplishment. The situation and circumstances of hundreds of congregations and feeble churches in our own highly favoured land, plead, though with a disconsolate tone, yet most pathetically, for a minister who will hold forth variety as a prominent trait in his publick discourses.

9thly. *The promotion of the declarative glory of God, demands that ministers of the gospel publish to mankind things new as well as old, in their delivering his messages.*

In the works of creation, providence, and redemption, the Lord has been pleased gradually to unfold his perfections and his great and glorious designs. So the advancement of his wonderful works towards their highest perfection, is an increasing evidence of the divine glory, as it respects the views of created intelligences. And although the material creation wonderfully displays the glory of God, yet its brightest manifestations are exhibited in his moral kingdom. Whatever pertains to a more enlarged display of the wonderful works and ways of God, tends to the furtherance of this great and glorious end; hence, angels and men are instrumental in promoting the work. And the Lord is pleased to see his gospel heralds take a wide range in their survey of his empire, and to proclaim his manifold works, his varied mighty acts, to all his subjects. If they attain but a scanty view of his doings, and rehearse a contracted portion of his ways, they eclipse the glory of his great name. But, if they expatiate in the various territories of his vast dominions, and with their enlarged views, promulge their newly

discovered wonders, they are the honoured agents of promoting the declarative glory of God.

The present age is wonderful for improvements in the various arts and sciences, and glorious in relation to the advances and honour of the intellectual world. How do interesting and useful inventions abound! How varied the works of man, which are wonderful to behold! And would not the Lord be delighted to have the remaining hidden glories of his holy word discovered and brought forth to the view of the sons of men? Surely his name would be magnified among the people, if their admiration should be duly excited by the exhibition of new and divine things; and by beholding the manifold and increasing wonders of his kingdom upon earth. Will the whole world be peopled before the end of time? And will not the whole volume of divine revelation be preached before that period? Doubtless every interesting text in the sacred scriptures will be selected as a foundation for religious instruction in the house of God, before the archangel shall proclaim, that time shall be no longer. Then why should not the ambassadors of God now aspire to give him glory by bringing forth new texts, manifold subjects, and variously improved exhibitions of divine truth? There are thousands of interesting and admirable propositions contained within the pages of the divine canon, which are yet to be the themes of benevolent invention, of new ideas, and of newly modified illustrations to the ministers of the gospel. Much of the holy scriptures is yet to be more thoroughly explored and more fully understood, besides the prophetic parts. And must it not be for the declarative glory of God? Must it not be pleasing in his sight to behold the expositors of his holy word, humbly but zealously engaged to unfold more and more of its glorious contents? Shall it yet be said, that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light? Does not the declarative

glory of God, demand of the present age that the investigations and discoveries of the manifold wonders of his kingdom, should equal the inventions and improvements of the political and intellectual world?

10thly. *The immortal interest of a vast number of human beings, is an important consideration.*

The great end of divine revelation in the preaching of the word as it relates to man, is his eternal salvation. Hence a most important inquiry naturally arises, How should the word be preached so as to be instrumental in saving the greatest number of human beings? But the various particulars which have been adduced in this discourse, serve to make it evident, that an extensive and interesting variety of religious subjects would have the most favourable tendency to promote the immortal interest of man.

It may be replied, some ministers who have not been noted for an extensive scope and variety of discourses, have been instrumental in winning souls to Christ. Grant it: But, if an interesting and extensive variety of subjects had been held forth as a prominent trait in their publick instructions, it is highly probable that their congregations would have been greatly enlarged, and more souls converted under their ministry.

Again: It may be remarked, that some ministers of eminent talents, and whose sermons have been peculiar for variety, have had but little success as to any apparently saving effects from their labours. Let me answer, Their discourses may have had a general deficiency of striking, evangelical, and most important truths; or they may have been deficient as it respects a life of prayer and devotedness to God.

An instance of any salutary effect from an excitement of curiosity, may be demanded. Zaccheus, from a laudable curiosity to see the Saviour, ascended a sycamore tree, and the same day salvation came to his house. And the relation of Christian experience, in thousands of instances, attest similar glorious results.

One important design of revelation was to be an exposition of the manifold works of God, exhibited in creation and providence; to explain their nature, and to show to man the agency, purposes, wisdom, and goodness of the Supreme Being, in their formation and government. Thus explained and thus illuminated, they become means of knowledge very extensive and eminently useful. Hence, in those places where the manifold doctrines, duties, and truths of divine revelation have been the most extensively and strikingly exhibited to the minds of men, there has the greatest number of souls been savingly converted as witnesses of the marvellous grace of God in the glorious effects of an interesting variety in the preaching of the word. The interest of Zion, and the salvation of multitudes of our fallen race, call loudly upon ministers to bring forth from their treasure a variety of things new and old, proportionate to the rising wonders and additional glories of the present age.

By a continued repetition of a certain series of subjects on a few points of divinity, instead of being an occasion of additional joy to the angels of heaven, in view of the conversion of sinners, there would be ground for seraphs to weep. If ministers of the gospel do not search for varied and interesting truths new and old, as for hid treasures, and bring them forth to the view of their hearers, must they not be unfaithful and guilty of the blood of souls? Surely the perishing condition of impenitent sinners, the bleeding cause of the Redeemer, the prosperity of Zion, and the immortal interest of a vast number of human beings, may serve to show how important it is that ministers of the gospel should hold forth variety as a prominent trait in their publick discourses.

SERMON XXIX.

MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL ENCOURAGED TO HOLD FORTH VARIETY, AS A PROMINENT TRAIT IN THEIR PUBLICK DISCOURSES.

MATTHEW XIII. 52.

Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old.

THIS discourse will be illustrated by inferences from the preceding subject.

1st. *It is highly important for ministers of the gospel to pay particular attention to their style in their publick discourses.*

As they generally have great variety of hearers, it should be plain, easy to be understood by common capacities; and elegant, so as to interest the most refined mind. To have one part of a congregation leave the house of God, complaining of the obscurity and bombast of a discourse; and the other of its vulgarity and ungrammatical sentences, is a melancholy circumstance. Or to have a people extol an abundance of flowery expressions in a sermon, of a continued series of tropes, figures, and metaphors, is an effect equally lamentable. Hence, words should be acceptable and style interesting, in that manner which is the best calculated to draw the attention of an audience to the subject for instruction, and impress their minds with a sense of the important truths delivered. The great object of a minister of the gospel should be, so to please his hearers with language as most effectually to excite in them a lively and deep interest in his discourse. And the chief end of an in-

teresting variety of words and sentences, should be the same as that of an interesting variety of subjects: viz. the promotion of the great and important objects of divine revelation.

As it is by words that thoughts and sentiments are conveyed to the understanding and conscience, so these should be aptly chosen, that they may communicate the particular ideas and truths designed. It is laudable for ministers of the gospel to bestow pains to find out words agreeable to the minds of their hearers, provided they be suited to convey divine truths in the plainest and most convincing manner. They are honourably employed, if they copy the example of the wise and royal preacher, by seeking out acceptable words, even those of uprightness and truth, set forth in the most forcible and persuasive arguments, so as to lead men to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

If divine truths be exhibited in suitable language, they will prove a source of peace, comfort, and consolation to saints; but of disquiet, terrour, and remorse, to sinners. Hence, says the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Thus, when the preaching of a minister is not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, it becomes a divine sword with two sharp edges, penetrating where no other sword can reach; for it lays open to the view of men their secret thoughts and intentions, even their most hidden purposes, and sins long forgotten, as naked and open to the eyes of him with whom they have to do. Notwithstanding, the most solemn and glorious realities of eternity may be discussed in a manner so indefinite, and with a style so languid, as not to interest the attention either of saints or sinners. But, let the same

divine truths be exhibited with striking words and energy of expression, some will fill the souls of believers with extatick joy in view of the unspeakable glories of heaven, and others would pierce the conscience and heart of the impenitent, forcing convictions and alarms upon the most haughty and obstinate, and presenting a hell with devouring flames near to their view. How great the power of language, and how highly important for ministers of the gospel to pay particular attention to their style in their publick discourses!

2dly.* *It is highly important for ministers of the gospel to attain an interesting manner in the delivery of their publick discourses.*

Eloquence in the proclaiming of the glorious truths and narrations of the word of God, is highly favourable to the promotion of the same great and desirable ends, as a good style and an interesting variety of subjects. Indeed, without an engaging or interesting delivery, the most ingenious and striking discourses generally make but little impression. How many thousands of excellent sermons have served only to lull one part of the congregation to sleep, and to render stupid those that were awake, because they were delivered in an enervate and monotonous manner! But if a speaker be eloquent, though his discourse have no peculiar merit, he commands attention; and his illustrations commend themselves with weight to the minds of his hearers.

The talent of oratory is not merely to excite the passions, but to convey light to the understanding, to penetrate the conscience, and affect the heart. And though mankind may feel indifferent, and have their thoughts roving to the ends of the earth, when an ordinary speaker addresses them with the most heavenly and divine messages; yet, who is not interested, who is not eagerly drawn to the subject, when rhetorical sounds vibrate on the ear? How do they serve to awaken both saint and sinner! Shall

* See Doctor Porter's Analysis relating to Elocution, &c.

it be deemed highly necessary for lawyers and statesmen to be eloquent men? Surely it is as much more important for ministers of the gospel to be eloquent, as the well-being of man for eternity is more important than his well-being for time. And does not the present age, in a special manner, demand of them much attention to rhetorick? The number of orators among other professions, the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, the glorious prospects of saints, and dreadful prospects of sinners, should urge ministers of the gospel and students of divinity, with unwearied exertions to improve their voice, and attain an interesting manner in the delivery of their publick discourses.

If a man be eloquent, he has the power of being extensively useful; for he will collect or obtain a large congregation, and have opportunity of preaching to many saints and sinners. It is a lamentable fact, that many worthy ministers in these United States, have but few attend their ministry, and scarcely receive a scanty support, because they have not the gift of an interesting delivery in the pulpit. How many more respectable congregations might soon be collected, and ministers comfortably and promisingly settled, if there were a supply of those who were truly eloquent. But the days of youth are far the most favourable for acquiring the talent of a natural and interesting delivery of a discourse; and, if young men who hope to become ministers of the gospel, do not zealously and perseveringly improve this golden period, with a view to this very important attainment, they will have lasting and painful regret for their presumptuous and criminal negligence. If a most impressive, most animating, or most alarming sermon, be delivered without an easy and interesting address, eternal realities are made to appear at a great distance. But, if divine truths be gracefully and forcibly exhibited, a holy God, a heaven and hell, seem near at hand. How great the effect of ministerial eloquence to make men believe

and realize the varied and interesting truths of divine revelation! And what minister of the gospel, that prays for eminent usefulness, must not ardently pant for this gift? Thousands of arguments relating to this particular, begin to crowd upon my mind; but I must forbear. Surely the few things suggested, will serve to show the encouragement, and how highly important it is for ministers of the gospel to attain an interesting manner in the delivery of their publick discourses.

3dly. *It is highly important for ministers of the gospel to be men of profound erudition and study.*

Unless their information be extensive, and they give all diligence for higher attainments in useful knowledge, they will be unable to bring forth things new and old, so as to exhibit an interesting variety as a prominent trait in their publick discourses. It is generally granted, that they should be men of eminent piety, whose souls and lives should be devoted to the work of the ministry; but the same arguments that would show, that their Christian experience should be extensive and their walk exemplary, would make it evident that other extraordinary gifts and acquirements would be highly important. How can a minister instruct and edify his hearers, unless he shall have made greater proficiency, and have superior skill in those things which do particularly relate to his profession? He should not only study to have a conscience void of offence in the sight of God, but he should be enabled to perform his ministerial services as one whose qualifications would recommend him to a people as their teacher. In accordance with this sentiment, the apostle Paul addresses Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Thus Timothy was enjoined studiously to endeavour to approve himself in the sight of God in his conduct and ministrations, and to exhibit himself by his performances as a skilful workman, who understood

his business, and who would not be put to shame by having his work examined. A large number of the inspired penmen do exhibit indubitable evidence not only of their being devoted to the service of the Most High, but also of their being men who had acquired a rich fund of varied and useful knowledge, both human and divine; and whose souls panted for more extensive acquirements, and more enlarged views, in regard to the wonderful scenes of creation, providence, and redemption.

If ministers of the gospel, in the present age, have not a good foundation laid for mental and theological improvement, and if they be not men of study, their people must be fed with old provision; nor will they be refreshed with running and living streams: but they must hunger and thirst for the rich dainties of the gospel through ministerial deficiency and negligence. How lamentable for a gospel minister to trust to his former attainments as an inexhaustible fund, from which to derive constant supplies. Instead of giving himself wholly to his work, he may be said not to give himself to it at all. His illustrations will be general and vague; and the people of his charge, for new things, must hear a continued repetition of old; and, instead of experiencing the varied blessings of an interesting variety of publick discourses, and a corresponding style, they will participate the contrary effects, the judgements of a barren and unfaithful minister. Although the ways and means of improvement are manifold, and the objects unbounded, still with assiduity must a man improve them, in order to replenish his own mind, and to be capable of instructing others. If the education, the reading, and the contemplations of a divine, be superficial, his instructions will be but chaff instead of wheat. What man upon earth does it become to be diligent in his vocation, more than a minister of the gospel? Who sustains a station more elevated than he? or has a more important trust committed to his charge?

How important for him, then, profound erudition and close application to study!

4thly. *We should emulate one another to the attainment of enlarged views in relation to the manifold works of God.*

This subject should be improved by Christians and by all men, as an excitement to a spirit of liberality, of candour, and of accuracy in the judging of the opinions and actions of men, and of the divine procedure and operations. And, that they may derive much light to see how important it is to be thus influenced, permit me to close this discourse with remarks on the subject from the Christian Philosopher. Who is the most candid and liberal Being in the universe? God. And why is God to be considered as the most liberal intelligence that exists? Because he embraces a minute, a full, and comprehensive view of all the circumstances, connexions, relations, habits, motives, temptations, modes of thinking, educational biases, physical affections, and other causes, that may influence the sentiments or the conduct of any of his creatures.

Who among created intelligences may be viewed as endued with these qualities in the next degree? The loftiest seraph that God has created, who has winged his way to numerous worlds, and taken the most extensive survey of the dispensations of the Almighty, and of his creatures and events.

Who among the sons of men, is the most illiberal and inaccurate in the judging of opinions, of persons, and of things? The man who has lived all his days within the confines of his native village—who has never looked beyond the range of his own religious party—whose thoughts have always run in one narrow track—whose reading has been confined to two or three volumes—who cares for nothing either in the heavens or the earth, but in so far as it ministers to his convenience, his avarice, or his sensual enjoyment—who will admit no sentiment to be true, but what he may have heard from his

own parson—and whose conversation seldom rises beyond the slanderous remarks which are circulated among his neighbours. Persons of such a character are entirely unqualified for forming a correct judgement, either of the sentiments and actions of men, or of the works and the ways of God; for they are devoid of that information and those principles, which are requisite to form a rational decision in relation to either of these subjects.

It may be admitted as a kind of axiom in our estimate of human character, that, in proportion to the ignorance and narrow range of view which characterize any individual, in a similar proportion will be his want of candour, and his unfitness for passing a sound judgement on any subject that is laid before him. But, the man who has taken excursions through the widest range of thought, accompanied with a corresponding improvement of his moral powers, will be the most liberal and candid in his decisions on the moral and intellectual qualities of others. To these maxims, few exceptions will generally be found. In forming an enlightened judgement in regard to any action or object, it is essentially requisite that we contemplate it in all its different features and aspects, and in all its minute circumstances, bearings, and relations. On the same principle, it must be admitted that he who has viewed religion in all its requisitions and consequences, who has taken the most extensive survey of the manifestations of God, and of the habits and relations of men, is the best qualified to pronounce a candid and accurate decision on all the intellectual and moral cases that may come before him. And, if the spirit of these sentiments be founded on fact, it will follow that the more we resemble God in the amplitude of our intellectual views and benevolent affections, the more candid, and liberal, and accurate, will our judgements be in reference to all the actions, objects, and relations we contemplate.

On the other hand, the man who is confined to a

narrow range of thought and prospect, is continually erring in the estimates he forms, both in respect to physical facts, to general principles, and to moral actions. He forms a premature and uncharitable opinion on every slander and report against his neighbour. Without hesitation does he condemn and throw an unmerited odium on whole bodies of men, because a few of their number may have displayed weakness or folly. He hates and despises men and their opinions, because they belong not to his political or religious party. And while he pronounces his decisions on the motives of his fellow mortals, with as much confidence as if he had surveyed their hearts with the eye of omniscience, he cannot hear an objection against his favourite opinions with patience, nor an apology for any set of principles but his own. He is arrogant and dogmatical in his assertions, and will make no concessions to the superior wisdom of others. Hence, he sets himself with violence against every proposal for reformation in the church, because his forefathers never thought of it; and because such innovations do not suit his humour and pre-conceived opinions. In the most confident tone does he decide on what God can and cannot do, as if he had taken the most perfect survey of infinite perfection; and he frets at the divine dispensations, when they do not exactly correspond with his own humour and selfish views. He vainly imagines that he is better qualified to pronounce a decision on the varied topicks of divinity, than all the philosophers and divines, and all the brightest geniuses, who have ever appeared in the world, though he cannot but confess that he never gave himself the trouble to examine into such matters. His views of the providential dispensations of God, are equally partial and distorted. If disease, or poverty, or misfortune, happen to his neighbour, especially if he had withdrawn from the religious party to which he belongs, it is considered as a penal judgement for error and apostacy. If

prosperous circumstances attend his family or religious party, it is viewed as a sign of divine approbation. He views not the hand of God, except in uncommon occurrences; and then he imagines that a miracle is performed—that the wheels of nature are stopped to accomplish the event. Seldom does he look beyond the precincts of his own church or nation, to observe the movements of the divine footsteps toward other tribes of his fallen race. He overlooks the traces of divine operation, which are every moment to be seen above and around him; and yet, in the midst of all such partial and contracted views, he will sometimes decide on the wisdom and rectitude of the ways of God with as much confidence as if he had entered into the secret counsels of the Eternal, and surveyed the whole plan of his procedure. Such are a few prominent outlines of the character of thousands whose names are enrolled as members of the visible church, and whose illiberality and self-confidence are owing to the contracted notions they have formed of God and of religion. And surely it must appear desirable to every enlightened Christian, that every proper means should be used to prevent rational, immortal beings, from remaining enchain'd in such mental thraldom.

On the other hand, the man who takes an enlightened view of all the works and dispensations of God, and of all the circumstances and relations of subordinate beings, readily acquires a nobleness and liberality of mind, and an accuracy in the judging of things human and divine, which no other person can possess. He does not hastily take up an evil assertion against his neighbour; for he considers how unfounded such reports often are, and how much they may be owing to the insinuations of envy or malice. And when he can no longer doubt of an evil action being substantiated against any one, he does not triumph over him in the language of execration, for he considers all the circumstances, relations, feelings, and temptations, with which he may

have been surrounded; and reflects that he himself is a frail, sinful creature, and might possibly have fallen in a similar way, had he been placed in the same situation. He does not trumpet forth the praises of a man, who has performed one brilliant, benevolent deed, as if he were a character to be admired and eulogized, while the general course of his life is marked with vice, and an utter forgetfulness of God and religion; nor does he fix a stigma of immorality upon the person who may have acted foolishly or sinfully in one or two instances, while the general tenour of his conduct has been marked by purity and rectitude; for in both cases, he considers that it is not a single action, but general habits, which determine the character of any individual. Esteeming the wise and the good, he holds friendly intercourse with them, to whatever political or religious party they belong. He can bear with affability and candour, to have his opinions contradicted; and can differ from his neighbour in many disputed points, while at the same time he values and esteems him. Nor will he brand a man as a heretick or deist, because he takes a view of some opinions in theology in a different light from what he himself does; for he considers the difference of habits, studies, pursuits, and educational prejudices, which must have influenced his opinions; and makes due allowance for the range of thought, to which he may have been accustomed. He is disposed to attribute the actions of others to good motives, when he has no proof of the contrary. No threats or physical force does he use to support his opinions, or to convince gainsayers; for he knows that no external coercion can illuminate the mind; and that the strength of arguments and the force of truth, can alone produce conviction. He is convinced how ignorant he is, notwithstanding all his study, observations, and researches, and presses forward, as long as he lives, to higher degrees of knowledge and of moral improvement.

And such a man is an active promoter of every scheme that tends to enlighten mankind, to meliorate their condition, and extend the knowledge of salvation to the ends of the earth; for he considers that it is not by miracles, but by the subordinate agency of intelligent beings, that God will effect the illumination, and moral renovation of our apostate race. He views the hand of God in all the movements of the scientifick, the political, and religious world; and perceives him accomplishing his purpose in the inventions of human genius, and in the economy of the minutest insect, as well as in the earthquake, the storm, and the convulsions of nations ; for he considers the smallest atom, and the hosts of heaven, as equally directed by eternal wisdom, and equally necessary in the universal chain of creatures and events. With a becoming modesty he speaks of the ways and works of God. When he meets with any dark and afflictive dispensation in the course of providence, he does not fret and repine ; but is calm and resigned, conscious that he perceives only a small portion of the chain of God's dispensations, and is therefore unable to form a just comparison of the connexion of any one part with the whole. When he contemplates the depraved and wretched condition of the greater part of the world at present, and for a thousand years past, notwithstanding the salvation which has been achieved for sinners of mankind, he is far from arraigning the divine goodness and rectitude, in leaving so many nations to walk in their own ways ; for he knows not what relation this dismal scene may bear; what influence it may have, or what important impressions it may produce, on worlds and beings with which we are at present unacquainted.

A man of such enlarged views is cautious in the pronouncing decisively respecting the dispensations of God, in regard to the universe at large. He does not, for example, assert with the utmost confidence, as some have done, that there never was, and never

will be, to all the ages of eternity, such a bright display of the divine glory as in the cross of Christ. Though he admires and adores the condescension and the love of God, in the plan of salvation which the gospel exhibits, and feels an interest in it far beyond that of any other special manifestation of Deity; yet he dares not set limits to the divine attributes and operations. He considers himself at present, with regard to the grand system of the universe, in a situation similar to that of a small insect on one of the stones of a magnificent edifice, which sees only a few hair-breadths around it, and is altogether incapable of surveying the symmetry, the order, and beauty of the structure, and of forming an adequate conception of the whole. Convinc'd is he, that he has never yet surveyed the millionth part of Jehovah's empire, and therefore cannot tell what the eternal Sovereign has been pleased to exhibit in its numerous provinces; and least of all, can he ever presume to divine into the depth of interminable ages, and boldly declare what the Almighty will or will not do, through eternity to come. He therefore views it as presumption, while he has no dictate of revelation for his warrant, to pronounce decisively, either on the one side or the other, of such a deep and important question, which seems above the reach of the loftiest seraph to determine. In short, he endeavours to take a view of all the manifestations of Deity within his reach, from every source of information which lies before him, and as far as his limited faculties will permit. Nor does he call in question the discoveries of science, because they bring to his ears most astonishing reports of the wisdom and omnipotence of Jehovah, and the boundless extent of his kingdom; but rejoices to learn that the grandeur of his dominions is actually found to correspond with the lofty descriptions of divine majesty and glory, recorded in the volume of inspiration, and is thereby inspired with nobler hopes of the glory and felicity of that heavenly

world, where he expects to spend an endless existence.

If, then, such be some of the features in the character of the enlightened Christian; if liberality, and candour, and accurate investigation, mark the judgements he pronounces on the sentiments and the actions of men, and on the works and the ways of God; and, if such views and feelings ought to be considered as more congenial to the noble and benevolent spirit of our religion, than the narrow and distorted notions of a contracted mind, it must be an object much to be desired, that the mass of the Christian world would be led into such trains of thought as might imbue their minds with a larger portion of this spirit. And, if diversified and occasional discussions on the topicks to which we have adverted, would have a tendency to produce this desirable effect, it is obvious that such branches of knowledge as are calculated to enlarge the capacity of the mind, and to throw a light over the revelations and the works of God, should no longer be over-looked in the range of our religious contemplations.

With such interesting remarks and noble sentiments of an eminent man and highly distinguished author, this discourse is concluded. May they serve to stimulate both the reader and hearer more diligently to search the scriptures, more devoutly to contemplate the works of creation and providence, and more fervently to love and praise the Author of redemption, and of their eternal salvation.

SERMON XXX.

MAN MUST RENDER HIS FINAL ACCOUNT TO GOD.

LUKE XVI. 2.

Give an account of thy stewardship.

MAN is an intelligent and accountable being. He is, in a subordinate degree, responsible to his fellow-men ; but his supreme responsibility is to God. During his life, in various respects is he frequently called to answer for his conduct ; and when the great drama of life shall be wound up, with its scenery closed by the curtain of death, he must render his final account.

The words of the text are included in one of the parables of the Saviour, spoken unto his disciples, but in the presence of the Pharisees. “ There was a certain rich man which had a steward ; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it, that I hear this of thee ? give an account of thy stewardship ; for thou mayest be no longer steward : Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do ? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship : I cannot dig ; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of my stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord ? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou ? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat.

And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commanded the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

A few remarks will suffice as an explication of this part of the parable. "By the rich man, is represented the Lord himself, the original and sole proprietor of all things: The steward designates the man who is intrusted with worldly riches, and misemploys them, or with any thing of which a good or bad use may be made: as the faculties of our souls, the members and senses of the body, health, strength, genius, learning, eloquence, authority, and influence. The wasting of the goods may denote, that he either misemployed his master's property by his own indulgence, or by bad management.

"The lord is next described as expostulating with the steward, who could neither deny the charge, nor excuse himself. Hence we are taught, that death will shortly put an end to every man's stewardship; and all who shall have misimproved their talents will be rendered speechless. When the steward heard the decisive sentence, he devised a plan well suited to his purpose, and consistent with his character; determining to seduce the debtors for the sake of their own advantage, to concur in defrauding their lord. By this measure he would confer an obligation on them; and they, being accomplices in the fraud, would be restrained from informing against him. Notwithstanding, if they should refuse to give him assistance in his distress, he, as a desperate man who had nothing to lose, could inform against them to the great injury of their character and property. When this project came to light, his lord commanded the unjust steward, not for his iniquity, but for his policy, inconcerting a plan of providing against the time of approaching indigence. In view of his conduct, it was granted, that worldly men are more prudent in

respect of their temporal interests than the people of God are in reference to their eternal concerns."

The subject is now clearly presented in the following light. When death closes the probationary state of man, *he must give an account of himself to God.* Life, with all its manifold privileges and concerns, is intrusted to mortals as to stewards, whose indispensable duty is, to improve all for the promotion of the divine glory. The method proposed in the prosecution of this discourse, is, to bring to view some of the privileges, or talents, of which we must, at last, render a supreme and impartial account. And by a *talent* may be understood any opportunity, gift, or means which God grants to men to serve him in time, and thus prepare for a blessed existence in eternity.

1st. *Time itself may be considered as a talent.*

The period of our probationary state is a precious, an invaluable treasure, put into our hands, which we may and ought to improve with a supreme regard to the glory of God. Time may be defined a sacred trust committed to us, moral agents, as stewards for the great moral Governour, and Lord of the universe. And, as we are accountable to him for all our thoughts, words, and actions, so we must account for all our conduct, during every day of our lives, from the time in which we are capable of improvement and usefulness. When death, with his irreversible mandate, shall summon us to give an account of our stewardship, days and weeks, months and years, with all the deeds done in the body, we shall find registered for our supreme trial, when the books shall be opened in the high court of heaven. And as these periods allotted us in our probationary state, are greatly varied, so the account which must be rendered by some, will be vastly more solemn than that of others.

Let each one of us then make the important inquiry, how shall we, so highly and momentously responsible, husband our precious time to the best

possible advantage ? Surely, in opposition to idleness and inactivity, industry and diligence should fill up our golden moments. As idleness is the parent of mischief, so the hand of the diligent maketh rich. An idle person is peculiarly exposed to fall into various sins, and to contract many pernicious habits, from which industry would prove a timely and wholesome antidote. How many are the evils which individuals undergo, and with which society is burdened, in consequence of this *one vice*, this *bane* of mind and body, this *contagious poison* of the community ! The situations of most men are such, that the duties which they owe to their families and fellow-men, call upon them to be industrious and prudent of their time. Nor can any spend their moments idly, without contracting guilt. An idle and slothful steward, even in temporal concerns, must be accounted a deficient, and unprofitable servant; for one will not be slothful in business, who is fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

The young should remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and consider early piety as their highest adorning. They should also diligently improve their opportunities for obtaining a good education, and knowledge in the useful arts and sciences, or some mechanical branch, that they may have the means of obtaining a competence in advancing life, and become useful members of society. To this end, let them consider, how many in middle and old age, with painful sensations of regret, reflect on their past, idle and neglected youth. Thus their mispent *golden period* is shortly exchanged for bitter repentance. But would any excel in some useful trade or profession ? or in any honourable pursuit ? Then let them in early life, shun idleness, and with diligence pursue some honest calling, so that they may render a good account to their final Judge for their precious time.

The duties of persons of mature years, relating to themselves, or families, or to their fellow-men ;

or those of the immediate exercises of devotion, are so various and indispensable, that they may justly shudder at the thought of spending one day in slothfulness. Daily labour, offices of usefulness, or acts of charity and piety, should excite them to diligence. Then let all practically remember, that their time is not absolutely their own—that it is a talent committed to them from Heaven, and of which the supreme, moral Governour demands a wise and faithful improvement. Are some in easy or affluent circumstances in life? Then surely they are under increasing obligations to do much good. Though they may be exempt from toilsome, bodily labour; yet they are not free to indulge in lasciviousness and indolence. The Lord has not allotted them their time for self-indulgence and sloth. He demands a nobler use of their leisure moments; the promoting of the welfare of others, and the advancement of his cause. As youth should devote their youthful days in preparation, and with a wise reference to a future, advanced age, so should all account it their main business so to consecrate their time as to prepare for a blessed eternity.

2dly. *Natural abilities are talents which mankind ought to improve in view of giving an account of their stewardship to God.*

Some men are gifted with natural talents much more capacious than others. But, in the great day of final requisition, the momentous inquiry will be, how each one has improved them: whether for the honour of an intelligent and immortal being, or for his shame and everlasting contempt. All the powers of the human soul are capable of vast improvement and enlargement. And, accordingly as mankind shall have improved or misimproved their natural faculties, whether bodily or mental, so will they with joy, or with sorrow, give a final account of their stewardship. They who improve their hearing and seeing, and other senses, and members of the body, as stewards for God, will meet the

approbation of their Judge. But they who employ them as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, must endure his frown. The use which is made of the tongue in social circles, in the transactions of business, and in religious conversation, will be the subject of a solemn and momentous interrogation, and to many an utter astonishment. The faculty of perception should be exercised as a medium of contemplation on the glorious works of God, and of discernment to know his will. Would memory stand the solemn test, let it be engaged in treasuring up in the mind ideas which will prove useful and worthy its high office. Reason must be scrutinized, whether exercised for the dignity, or for the disgrace of human nature. Conscience will itself appear in the character both of a true witness and an impartial judge. Happy they whom it approves, but wo to those whom it condemns ! How careful then should mankind be to let this faculty discharge its proper office, and not turn a deaf ear to its voice ! They should not resist the light for fear of being reproved, nor stifle the admonitions of conscience ; for they who are bent on a false peace, must answer to God for their folly and guilt.

3dly. *Property is a talent, or gift, for the use of which men will eventually be called to give a strict and final account.*

Its distribution is greatly varied. While some are surrounded with riches, others have a mere competence. But to whom much is given, of them will much be required. The wealthy are enabled to render important aid, in supporting civil and religious institutions, in sending the gospel abroad to the destitute and perishing, and in relieving the wants of the poor. And as wealth confers the power of doing great good, so all the property which any possess, may be considered as their loan, to be improved in a manner perfectly satisfactory to the great Donor and original Proprietor. Hence the *first deposite* and all the *daily items* are minutely noted in

one of those books, which will be opened at the great judgement-day. And such procedure is perfectly equitable, "For the gold and the silver is the Lord's. The earth is his and the fulness thereof." But inexpressible indeed will be the disappointment of those who thoughtlessly squander their riches, till death shall announce, that they may be no longer stewards. How will they stand aghast and speechless, when the decisive requisition is made, "Give an account of thy stewardship!" Testimony will then be demanded as credentials of a wise and faithful improvement of all the talents ever intrusted to them.

It is indisputable, that the wealthiest of men, and indeed all men, are only stewards to the great Lord of all; yet many do not duly consider this, although numbers are continually accused unto him of having wasted his goods. They who are not prudent, in saving and laying up property, according to their ability, or who are not charitable proportionately to the little they may have, will be rendered inexcusable. Would the conscientious man gladly hear a remark, that he may wisely manage his temporal concerns? In your buying and selling, bestowing and accumulating, view yourself in the capacity of a *steward* for God, devoted to the promotion of his honour and interest. Carefully considering your circumstances and standing, as to your food and raiment, let not a spirit of extravagance be manifest to stigmatize you, nor a penurious disposition appear conspicuous to defame you. Whenever aid is requested for the furtherance of the Redeemer's cause, ask yourself, as standing before God, giving an ultimate account of your stewardship, *how much* he would have you give? or what you ought to do? In every expenditure of any worldly good, let the deed crown your character with wisdom as a servant of the Lord. In opposition to selfish and covetous views, let benevolent and liberal motives influence you in all your ways in the disposal of your

earthly possessions. Then, even though death, at an unexpected hour, summon you forth from your stewardship, it will be to exchange earthly things for heavenly; and for blessings temporal, to possess those which are eternal.

4thly. *Authority is a talent, with which some are intrusted as stewards accountable to God for its righteous exercise.*

So varied are the dispositions and situations of mankind, that some are raised to posts of honour and trust by their fellow-men, and others are in authority from their natural relation. Civil magistrates may do much for the suppression of vice, and the promotion of virtue. They are not only appointed by men, but also of God, to be a teravour to evil-doers, and for a praise to them that do well. And, as their station is elevated; so, as they shall have exerted their power, will their final account rise high in magnitude. Instructors of children and youth may do much, either by a good or bad example, to form the minds and manners of the rising generation. But, for their authority and influence over those whom they superintend, they must hereafter give an account of their stewardship.

The standing of parents is of the highest importance; and unparalleled their responsibility. How should they betimes restrain their children from vice, and instil into their minds the principles of the gospel! Eli and his sons came to an untimely end, because he was not faithful, in restraining them from wicked courses. Their awful death is on divine record, that others may be effectually warned to shun both his and their pernicious examples. Let parents fear the reproaches of their children on a dying bed, and to meet them, in giving a final account of their stewardship, unless their parental authority be wisely and faithfully exerted. Let them train up those peculiarly intrusted to their care to be peaceful and useful members in society, and early to revere sacred institutions. As the authority

of any is more or less dignified and extensive, so will the account which they must render to God, be proportionably solemn and important.

5thly. *Knowledge and influence are talents, for the most noble use of which mankind are accountable stewards.*

A person of extensive information has the power of doing much good, or much evil. How careful, then, should such a one be to disseminate truth, to portray the varied beauties of virtue; and to depict vice in all its deformities, and fatal tendencies! And let those, whose influence is eminent, whether from rank, from engaging manners, or fluency of speech, recommend the principles and ways of godliness, and discountenance those of ungodliness. How do persons, elevated by knowledge and influence, bear a powerful sway over the minds and habits of many! And whilst some, with zeal and perseverance, improve their talents for the good of their fellow-men, and the glory of God; by others they are misimproved, to the spreading of impiety, and the incalculable detriment of the community. That class of men whose acquired abilities and accomplishments are great, have a most powerful influence in forming the customs and morals of individuals, of societies, and of nations. All have a greater or less influence over their friends and associates—an influence favourable or unfavourable, not only in their presence, but in their absence—not only for time, but for eternity. Then may useful knowledge be wisely diffused, and moral influence happily exerted, since every one of us shall give account of himself to God for the improvement of these talents.

6thly. *God's holy day is a blessed season intrusted to us as stewards.*

The attendance of publick worship on the first day of the week, as it is a consecrated opportunity granted to men to serve him, may be considered as a talent, for the improvement of which they must

render a strict account. The Lord's day is a heavenly gift, a special privilege, a sacred means, for promoting and attaining the most glorious ends. Thus viewed, some generally enter the sanctuary, and attend the preaching of the word, though others seldom or never attend. But whether they attend or not they must render their account to God. It is the day which he has appointed for his worship, and for the advancing of the Redeemer's kingdom on the earth. Yet how frequently do some absent themselves from its regular observance in the house of God, and how varied their excuses !

Some pretend they have not decent apparel for attendance on publick worship. But are they industrious and economical? and can they not appear so decently as some of their neighbours? The Lord would have them tread his courts without costly raiment; for he looketh in such instances, on what they have, and not on what they have not. So they are without excuse. Others forsake the house of God because their apparel is not so cleanly or neatly prepared as they could wish. But, were they invited to a tea party, or to attend a ball, their excuses would vanish, and they be in readiness. Thus, they manifest a greater regard for social circles and amusements, than they do for the service of God and their immortal interests. Some do not attend divine service, for the want of time for preparation. But, did they not spend the precious hours of the morning of the Lord's day in sleep or indolence, they would have time sufficient to be in readiness. Then, how trifling and vain such excuses, and what a sad account to be rendered to God! But others have other excuses. They must stay at home to post their books, to read some history, novel, or newspaper, lately received. Perhaps accounts are to be settled, or some labour in the shop or field to be completed. And others are engaged, on the Lord's day, in amusements and sports, which would not be lawful, even on other days. But how

must the Lord look down from heaven with a frown, and indignation, upon such doings on his holy day ! And how by multitudes is the gracious day of preparation for heaven spent as an awful day of preparation for hell !

But concerning those who tread the sacred courts of Jehovah, what are their views ? Are they eager to hear a new speaker, a cunningly devised discourse ? or to extol eloquence ? In time of divine service, do they appear with gayety and levity ? Or do they conscientiously hear the truth, receive it into a good heart, and practise it in their lives, as those who expect to give an impartial account of their stewardship to their supreme Lord ? How solemn and vastly different will be the account, and the rewards which will be reaped, by those privileged with the stated expounding of the word on the Lord's day ! The eye of God is now upon us, and the recording angel of heaven is now registering the manner in which we attend publick worship. Then let us so improve the invaluable hours of holy time, that when we, as no longer stewards, shall be required to render our account to God, our Sabbaths may not rise up in judgement as a swift witness to testify against us.

7thly. *Family prayer may be considered as a talent to be improved.*

The goodly effects of family worship evince the duty, as it is a peculiar opportunity of doing good, and a means of serving God. And what a privilege, that the head of a household may, evening and morning, read and explain the divine word, and lead in prayer ! What parent is there, whose heart glows for the present and future well-being of his dear offspring, who could be denied this exercise ? What benevolent father does not esteem it one of his greatest privileges to be in the circle of his family, and to teach religion both by precept and example ? Methinks I hear one say, Gladly would I lead in family prayer, if I had a gift. A gift ! What is meant by a gift ?

Eloquent address and engaging delivery? Alas! which is the most acceptable to the Searcher of hearts—eloquence of speech, or the broken expressions from one of an humble and contrite heart? O, may not the wo of those families, that call not upon God, fall on our heads! May the evening and morning sacrifice of thanksgiving and prayer ascend to heaven as consecrated incense from our family altars, and draw down blessings on parents and children, on churches and the world. Let not the highly precious season of family devotion be a misimproved talent for our condemnation, when we shall be called to render an account to God of our stewardship.

8thly. *Secret prayer may be considered an opportunity and means of serving God, and a talent which all may and ought to improve.*

If a pious soul were denied this privilege, how would sorrow fill the mind! How did the closet, the garden, the mountain, and the cold ground, witness the fervency of the Saviour's petitions, and private ejaculations! And who would wish to die, without following his example? Secret prayer is suited to every age and condition in life. To say nothing concerning the precepts of divine revelation to enforce this duty, let us, at least, claim it as our privilege. Let secret prayer be the peace and life of our souls. Can we indeed serve the Lord acceptably, and not habitually exercise this gift? Rather let us pray without ceasing, that we may not be inexcusable in that day, when we shall be called to give a final account of our stewardship to God.

REMARKS.

1st. *How manifestly inconsistent are the ideas of many respecting human accountability.*

They fear that drunkenness, profane swearing, theft, extortion, and murder, will place those, who shall be found guilty of such vices, or crimes, on

the left hand of the Judge, as unworthy of the kingdom of heaven. But they hope that all they, who may be moral, social, and amiable in their manners, will have their names enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. Alas! how will the final, remunerating injunction, "*Give an account of thy stewardship,*" expel all their deceptions, and thrill their hearts with consternation! How will they be able to endure the decisive, scrutinizing inquiry, If in time they were ever stewards, devoted to the service of God? if, to his glory, they wisely improved those ten, fifty, or seventy years, allotted them, as a day of grace, a space for repentance, and for preparation for the holy and extatick joys of heaven? None will then be viewed as standing neutral; for the misapplication of talents, the burying of a talent, or even the carefully laying up of a talent in a napkin, will be awarded by the supreme Judge as unprofitable service, and consign their stewards to outer darkness. Some have only one, others a hundred, and some thousands of sabbaths granted them as precious opportunities to secure the pearl of great price. And what trembling must seize those, who spend them all in the ways of folly, and preparation for perdition! When the books shall be opened, at the great judgment day, then the thoughts, the motives, and hidden wickedness, of many, will be revealed to an assembled universe. The day of final scrutiny will put an end to every man's delusions. Though many now deceive themselves, they need not; for they have the faithful and unerring word of God to disclose every hidden, fatal danger; and to portray all the things that are excellent.

2dly. *Wisdom admonishes every soul of us now to seek an advocate, to plead our cause in that solemn, decisive day of trial.*

It is customary for any person, having an important cause to be tried before a secular judge, previously to make application to some counsellor, that he might examine the merits of his case. And,

if he should not seek for one both skilful and able, till the hour of trial, common sense would upbraid him for the foolishness of his conduct.

Now every human being has a cause depending at the high court of heaven. From this trial there is no escape. Nor can there be any appeal from the decision; for the supreme, moral Governour and King of the universe is the Judge. And now do some persons feel deeply interested and solicitous in view of the approaching decisions of an earthly court? How then should all the energies of every soul be roused, the most delicate sensibility excited, and an agonizing concern be conspicuous, under an overwhelming sense of his impending, supreme trial, the decision of which is an irrevocable doom, an eternal destiny! Fellow-mortals, what then does wisdom admonish us? for we are all thus circumstanced. We are the debtors, bankrupts—for we owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. Who will undertake for us? who can be sufficient for these things? Surely none upon earth. From the gospel alone is there any gleam of hope in our case. To the law and to the testimony let us go, and there is a record, that the Judge has a most lovely Son, his dearly beloved, the darling of heaven. And O, will he undertake for us? And if he, should, would his Father be well pleased? Hear some of his titles—Jesus—Immanuel—Wonderful—Counsellor—Mediator. Again: “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” And the Father extends a sceptre of mercy, and saves to the uttermost all that come to him, through his intercessions. Then let us humble ourselves, apply to him, and frankly state the worst of our condition. Let us not be ashamed to have him see our distress, and wretchedness, and penitence. Let us turn from ourselves, and be enraptured with his glories. Let us go, without money, and without price, and give ourselves away to him for ever, entreating his love, his compassion, and his

efficacious plea in our behalf—Father, forgive them. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given amongst men, whereby we must be saved.” And the case of mankind is ruinous and desperate beyond comparison, unless they apply to an atoning Saviour, and have the great Counsellor of the court of heaven undertake their cause. Happy, indeed, are all they who are enabled to say, “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous.”

3dly. *Let humility possess our souls, and watchfulness characterize our doings.*

The follies and sins which we have already committed, should humble us in the dust, and enkindle a spirit of fervent prayer. Beings so accountable as we are, should be excited to the greatest diligence and faithfulness. The only way to redeem our time, is to let the mispent past serve to infuse deep contrition of heart, and inspire us with zeal in all well-doing for the future. And how blessed the privilege, that we may become reconciled to God, be devoted to his service in time, and at last, give an account of our stewardship to him with joy, and in our retribution, glorify and enjoy him for ever ! And as the Lord is frequently calling upon us, in his providence, and by his word and Spirit, inquiring, How is it that I hear such things of you ? reminding us, that ere long we can be no longer stewards, let us be looking for the coming, and waiting for the glorious appearance of the Lord our Judge.

Let us improve the fleeting days of our probationary state as a precious seed-time which all men, as intelligent and immortal beings, should husband in the wisest and best manner, with a view to a rich and glorious harvest. To this end, let every one use the greatest caution in the selection of seeds, and take heed in what manner they are sown ; for in the end of the world, all will reap in abundance. “He that soweth to the flesh, shall of

the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

How solemn the thought, that, every moment of our lives, we are standing on the brink of eternity, and the verge of everlasting joys, or precipice of endless sorrows. Our lives are but a shadow—the arrows of death are continually levelled at our hearts—and we liable to be summoned unawares by the king of terrors into the immediate presence of our final Judge, to be awarded according to the deeds done in the body. How immensely desirable, then, to enter upon our future amazing existence, prepared for the unspeakable blessedness of its interminable ages!

What a cheering and consoling reflection, that neither abject poverty, malicious enemies, nor grim death, can pluck the soul of a believer from the hands of the divine Redeemer! Did the blessed Jesus frown in view of the ascension of the poor, despised beggar, to a mansion of glory? No: as an eternal monument of honour, it is inscribed in imperishable characters, "He was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Let every soul, then, in view of a glorious departure, a triumphant death, be vigilant in the performance of all Christian duties, that he may joyfully render a final account of his stewardship to God, and inherit the manifold blessings of the righteous in the kingdom of divine and ineffable glory.

THE END.

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